

Phone: 559-226-VOTE

info@lwvfresno.org

Web site:

www.lwvfresno.org

The *Fresno*

VOTER



Monday, August 10
Regular Board Meeting
5:30 pm via ZOOM

Wednesday, August 26
Women's Equality Day
5:30 p.m. Via ZOOM
Look for on-line
invitation

Members and Guests
invited to all League
meetings and events



JOIN US IN CELEBRATING

Women's Equality Day

**Commemorating the 100th Anniversary
of Women's Suffrage**

August 26, 5:30 p.m. via ZOOM

Meet our two honorees:

Linda Penner

Women's Equality Day Award



Janet Claassen

**Werner Lipton Award
for Volunteerism**



Never been on Zoom before?

- ◆ Type ZOOM in your search bar.
- ◆ Click on "Sign in"
- ◆ Click on "if you are a new member, join for free."
- ◆ Follow simple directions.

The ZOOM link will be sent to you in your e-mail. We will open it at 5:15 p.m. so new Zoomers can receive assistance navigating the site if necessary

See Page 3

President's Message



I've recently come to appreciate Virginia Kase, CEO of LWVUS. Virginia delivered a heartfelt call to action to delegates at June's online LWVUS Convention. "What does it mean to be non-partisan in hyper-partisan times? When democracy is attacked, we can't stay neutral. We must stand in our positions and advocate for what is right and just."

Virginia was first introduced to the League at the 2018 Biennial Convention in Chicago. There, she and then-president Chris Carson, sat on the dais in two easy chairs ready to engage in friendly conversation. I found the setting annoying. Who can converse casually in front of 900 people who just hired you? A prepared script was used, as if a living room conversation would have assigned lines.

Since we have little direct contact with the national level of the League, I didn't pay much attention to the work Virginia embarked on. But I took notice of the message she sent to League members on June 1, 2020 in response to the killing of George Floyd. "...We will be supporting our partners in the civil rights community who are working on legislation and policy reforms focused on creating systemic change in our government institutions... We have been invited to do this work, *but we must remember that we come to the table as allies.* We will listen to civil rights leaders spearheading this effort, and we will use our power, our talents, and our collective voices to support and amplify their work."

I concur with Virginia's view. We are very much allies to the Black Lives Matter and other movements for change. We are skilled advocates who consistently speak out for fairness, transparency, and access in the public arena. It is our duty to join the conversation and offer anything we can give to those at the forefront of these conversations.

Since 2018, under Virginia's leadership, financial support of the League by foundations has tripled, and initial work has been started to seek corporate sponsors for the League's work. I strongly support this effort. The League is a trusted brand, with a dedicated army of members to do its core work. Fundraising at all levels should take only minimal time away from the mission, *Empowering Voters-Defending Democracy.*

I know that you read our eNewsletters and monthly Voter and I encourage you to look for future messages from LWVUS CEO Virginia Kase. I'm proud to be part of the organization she leads.

Marianne

MEMBER NEWS

Please edit your roster



JEAN ANN COREY

Jean Ann Corey, a new member of the League last year, passed away on June 12. She was 72 years old. Jean worked as a nurse for Kaiser San Francisco and taught future nurses at Cuesta College in San Luis Obispo. She was a member of the Fresno Flats Historical Park board.

To protect privacy, new member information and updates will be sent periodically to members only.

It's always a good time for a gift to the League. LWVUS is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization so your gift and membership are tax deductible and gratefully accepted.

Please remember us

in your estate planning.



The Voter is a monthly publication of the League of Women Voters of Fresno

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AUGUST 26, 2020

One special day, Two special awards



Why is August 26, 2020, a special day?

It marks the Centennial Anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution, on August 26, 1920, which gave women the right to vote — or as some say, when women demanded the right to vote.

In 1973, Congress approved an annual recognition of this day. Thus, Women’s Equal Day was born and is acclaimed each year by the United States president.

The Fresno League of Women Voters began honoring a local woman as the winner of the Women’s Equality Day award in 2011. We select an individual whose achievements have been made in a profession that is usually non-traditional for women. The 2020 winner is Linda Penner, retired Chief of Probation for Fresno County. You can read her accomplishments below.

This year we are having a dual celebration which includes the **Werner Lipton Award**. Dr. Lipton was a research scientist who was a long-time environmental activist and volunteer in Fresno County. When he died the award was established in his memory and the first award was given to him posthumously in 2006. Dr. Lipton’s wife, Joan, has been a member of the League since 1973 and was our president in 1995-97. Our awardee this year is **Janet Claassen**, whose biography also appears below.

LINDA PENNER

Linda served the Probation Department in Fresno County since 1977, including Chief Probation Officer from 2005 to 2012. She promoted a realignment ‘safety net’ through innovative supervision and service programs for the realigned population including a multiagency supervision team and evidence-based services that form the nucleus of the public safety response to the legislation.



Through her stewardship the department transitioned to Evidenced Based Practices for recidivism reduction. Linda championed for a culture that created integrity and professionalism, fairness and equity to courts and offenders.

She has served as a member of the Board of State and Community Corrections, and the State Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention .

EQUALITY DAY WINNERS

- 2011 Hilary Chittick
- 2012 Susan Anderson
- 2013 Brandi Orth
- 2014 Lynne Ashbeck
- 2015 Kerry Donis
- 2016 Debra Ikeda
- 2017 Irma Olgin Jr,
- 2018 Rei Hotoda
- 2019 Carole Goldsmith

JANET CLAASSEN

Janet worked tirelessly with the Friends of the Fresno County Library and organized and staffed their annual book sale.

She traveled with a Nigerian friend to her home village of Aku in Enugate State, Nigeria, and set up a library there and trained staff. A school was built that includes her library.



As a Master Gardener she volunteered at Scout Island to work with court referred teenagers to grow plants from seed for Tree Fresno, the San Joaquin River Parkway, Caltrans, schools and parks.

As a member of the California Naturalist program and the CA Native Plant Society Janet helped maintain China Creek, an undeveloped Fresno County Park in Centerville. She was the High School librarian for the Madera schools and retired in 2006.

LIPTON AWARD WINNERS

- 2006 Werner Lipton
- 2007 Gary Temple
- 2008 Dr. Lee Snyder
- 2009 Ellie Bluestein
- 2010 William Simon
- 2011 Mike McGarvin
- 2012 Coke Hallowell
- 2013 Radley Reep
- 2014 Bill Noblett
- 2015 Kathleen Garabed
- 2016 Richard Haas
- 2017 Paul Loeffler
- 2018 Curt Thornton
- 2019 Ruth Gadebusch

Voter Services

by Liz Shields



Voter Registration will be done remotely this year. Most registration will be done online although hard copies will be available for retirement homes and other locations without Internet access. We will be contacting Fresno State and the State Center Community College administrators to find out their plans to comply with the Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Act signed by the governor last October. The Act gives public college campuses the resources to designate an Empowerment Coordinator to create a civic engagement education campaign for each campus. We will also be contacting Fresno County high schools to determine their plans for registering seniors.

National Voter Registration Day is September 22, 2020. Tips on registering voters in the current pandemic will be posted, and help provided for digital organizing, building partnerships with organizations and working with vulnerable populations.

Candidate Forums are around the corner. Final filing date for candidates is August 7, 2020 with the list of certified candidates sent by the Secretary of State to the County Registrar by August 27, 2020. LWVC recommends that we partner with other organizations such as Chambers of Commerce to set up candidate forums. These community organizations can set the date and set up Zoom meetings. The League's job would be to provide the rules, send formal letters with the rules, provide moderators and timekeepers, but not contact candidates until the certified list is issued.

Twelve Propositions have qualified for the November election. We are planning to have a Zoom meeting for League members to discuss the propositions. We may record and post it on YouTube with a link on our Facebook and web page. If other groups or organizations want to have a similar presentation, Zoom meetings would be possible.

elizs44@yahoo.com

**SEE PROPOSITION SUMMARIES
ON PAGE 8**

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



Director Utecht reported that the Department of Behavioral Health is continuing to provide services for mental health and substance use disorders. Most services are provided virtually through telehealth; however, crisis services, lab work, and injections continue to be in-person. Some substance use disorder services also are available in-person. The number of mental health clients remains stable, though it appears that the number of individuals receiving treatment for substance use disorders has declined.

Persons with mental illnesses have the same legal rights and responsibilities guaranteed by law to all other persons. The Department is required to provide Patients' Rights Advocates (PRA) for its clients. PRA Stan Lum spoke to the Board this month to explain his duties that include investigating complaints, monitoring facilities, and assisting at legal hearings. Advocates work towards the "expressed interest" of the clients, though this might not be necessarily in their "best interest."

Families often believe that their loved ones do not receive the behavioral health services that they need—sometimes as a result of the "expressed interest" of the client, and sometimes because of the inability to navigate the complex behavioral health system of care. It has been several years since families have had an advocate to address their concerns. The Department has announced a new contract for Family Advocacy Services to meet this need. The Board and families look forward to having this support available again in our county.

The Director responded to the 2020 Board Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. Our Board was pleased to hear that work is being done on each of the recommendations but progress is slow, especially due to the coronavirus. Of particular note is the planned implementation of Assisted Outpatient Treatment (Laura's Law) by the end of the year, and the extensive work being done with the homeless population, many of whom experience behavioral health disorders.

A letter to Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Jim Yovino asked for more information about services for LGBTQ+ students. His response enumerates different initiatives for student support. In collaboration with the Department, the county was awarded \$6 million over four years for four Wellness Centers on or near school campuses which specifically addresses LGBTQ+ needs. evansalca@comcast.net



NEXT FUSD Meetings: August 12 and 26

Watch streaming on FUSD website, Xfinity ch 94;

comment at publiccomment@fresnounified.org

Education news at the local, state and national levels has been all about the opening of schools for the 2020-2021 school year. Different school districts announced plans to implement different strategies: fully classroom-based instruction, fully online instruction, or hybrid plans that provide some combination of classroom based and online teaching and learning.

At the final June meeting of the FUSD Board of Trustees, staff proposed a plan to reopen schools but included an opt-out provision for parents who wanted to keep their children at home with online instruction. The plan envisioned some flexibility dependent on the status of the virus locally. Early in July, based on the same plan, Superintendent Nelson advised parents to submit their preference for an online program and teachers to submit a statement of any need to avoid face-to-face teaching.



Initial plans that had to change

In the meantime, COVID cases in Fresno were rising and Fresno, Kings, Tulare, Merced and Madera Counties were put on California's COVID monitoring list, which mandates more restrictions. Los Angeles and San Diego announced that school there would begin solely online. Clovis, on the other hand, announced that schools would open. Demonstrating the level of disagreement among educators and in opposition to opening schools, some Clovis teachers began talking about forming Clovis' first teachers union.

Meanwhile the Fresno Teachers Association demanded that FUSD schools not reopen for classroom instruction and should delay the start of school to prepare for online instruction. At the national level the President and Secretary of Education DeVos urged reopening all schools and threatened to withhold funding from districts that did not begin face-to-face instruction.

Then the reality of California's situation set in. On July 17 Governor Newsom announced that public and private schools in counties on the monitoring list would have to

maintain online learning until they were off the watch list for 14 consecutive days. As a result, Superintendent Nelson and the FUSD Trustees held a news conference immediately following the governor's order and announced that schools here will open with only online learning on August 17.

Promises for better programs

Fresno Unified is still soliciting parent preferences for an online option should those families desire to maintain distance learning beyond the hoped-for eventual reinstatement of classroom meetings. Those families could continue on an *ELearn* platform. For all students in August, online learning will involve time with their regular assigned teachers during regular school hours. Superintendent Nelson said that he would be providing weekly updates as planning proceeds, but he promised not to lay off staff and to provide daily and weekly schedules to all students.

Funds available for PPE

In other news, community groups revealed plans to apply to the City and County for CARES ACT funding. One proposal for \$4.8 million would provide childcare vouchers for 388 families—190 in Fresno and 198 in the County. That proposal also included funds for Personal Protective Equipment for childcare centers, homes and license-exempt providers (family and friend caregivers). The County Office of Education is providing guidance and support for childcare providers about reopening.

A bill moving through the California legislature, AB331, would add a semester of ethnic studies to the list of high school required courses by 2023. It has passed the Assembly and the State Senate. Now it is up to Gov. Newsom to decide whether to sign it. There has been pushback over a proposed curriculum, which some have seen as narrow and possibly anti-semitic. In FUSD, ethnic studies is offered as an elective at the high school level. This summer some FUSD teachers have lobbied to have it added to the curriculum for all students at all grade levels.

Kayb@csufresno.edu

Water News

by Diane Merrill



The Kings River is an essential source of surface water for much of Fresno County, including the cities, rural residential areas, and agriculture in the eastern and central parts of the valley area of the county. It provides an estimated 92 percent of the overall surface water supplies in the Kings groundwater subbasin that underlies this portion of the County.

PhD hydrogeologist Davis Cehrs did a statistical analysis of annual precipitation and Kings River flow data over the 124 year period from 1896 to 2020. The data from his analysis points to increasing variability in Kings River flows, with extended dry periods punctuated with periods of very high flows. A recent example is the five-year drought from 2012 through the summer of 2016, followed by flood flows during the fall of 2016 and spring of 2017.

Another indicator of this variability is that both the high-

est, and the lowest, recorded annual Kings River flows have occurred since 1978, with very few years near the average. This is consistent with climate change modeling predictions that weather conditions are becoming more chaotic now and into the future.

The most extreme and extended dry periods were 15 dry years during the 18-year period from 1918 to 1935, and 14 dry years during the 18 years from 1944 to 1961. During dry flow sequences such as these, the dry years are 77 percent of the sequence.



Long periods of drought will have a severe impact on our area and will result in increased groundwater use by urban, rural residential, and agricultural water users. Dr. Cehrs urges local water agencies to prepare for groundwater overdrafts during dry periods, and to employ a full range of methods to capture Kings River water to recharge groundwater supplies during wet periods.

Climate Change

by Terri Figgs

The California Air Resources Board unanimously voted recently to pass the nation's first electric truck standard, a groundbreaking regulation that sends a clear signal to truck manufacturers and is a significant step in transforming the state's freight transportation industries.

The rule, which sets zero-emission truck sales targets for manufacturers beginning in 2024, is a major step forward in tackling deadly air pollution and controlling greenhouse gas emissions. The regulation is estimated to bring 300,000 electric trucks to California's roads by 2035, including 17,000 semi-trucks.



Some of the main contributors to air pollution are agriculture, oil drilling operations, large industries, and traffic along interstate 5 and highway 99. There are roughly 3.9 million people in the San Joaquin Valley that are exposed to some of the nation's most polluted air.

In California, transportation accounts for more than 40% of greenhouse gas emissions and 80% of smog-forming pollution in the state, with heavy-duty trucks among the largest polluters. In the San Joaquin Valley, car and truck emissions make up about half of all measured airborne particulate matter, according to the Board.

Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) is a clean, sustainable fuel made from methane that would otherwise be emitted

from landfills, dairy farms, and other waste sources. Over the last five years, RNG as a transportation fuel for heavy-duty trucks and buses has increased almost 600%, helping displace over seven million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. That's equal to the emissions from more than a million homes' electricity use for one year.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District administers a Truck Replacement Program, which provides funding for fleets to replace old vehicles with lower emitting vehicles or to purchase new zero emission, hybrid, or low oxides of nitrogen vehicles. Incentive amounts vary by weight class and fuel type. The District is currently accepting applications for the program.

tfiggs@comcast.net



In *Becoming Wild*, noted ecologist and author Carl Safina watches arbitrary cultural behaviors—feeding preferences, family and clan allegiances, mating displays and preferences—among sperm whales, scarlet macaws, and chimpanzees.

These are especially intelligent and communicative creatures who learn much of how to behave from their parents—usually but not always mothers—and from keen observation of their social group. Unpredictable and sometimes capricious behaviors emerge in these cultures and, in fact, among nearly all species. Safina's observations should inform humans about our susceptibility to both harmonious and dangerous patterns of belief and behavior.

Need 6 billion doses yearly

Assuming we are lucky in finding a vaccine that provides durable protection, we should celebrate the process of immunizing most of the earth's population against SARS-Co-V 2. Based on the worldwide capacity for producing and distributing 6 billion doses of influenza vaccine yearly—an amazing achievement by the pharmaceutical industry—we are likely to meet the new vaccine supply demands in the long term. Immunization will likely be phased, starting with the highest risk individuals and proceeding down the risk chain.

But will we ultimately achieve immunization of the 90% of people required for effective herd immunity when 30% of the US population thinks vaccines in general may be

more dangerous than the diseases they prevent?

Flu vaccine usage about 40%

Last year, 37% of the whole population and 67% of over-65 Americans accepted flu vaccination. The CDC (remember that organization?) estimates 500,000 hospitalizations and 35,000 deaths from influenza in 2019. The rate of preventing severe flu through vaccination varies from year to year, but averages about 40%.

It is astonishing that we permit such low rates of vaccination, given the consequences. It is notable that health care workers' vaccination rates are close to 100%; it is required if they want to show up for work. Also notable is that anti-vaccine sentiment is worldwide.

Science denialism harmful

One of the recent emergent and harmful cultural memes is science denialism. Fostered by internet conspiracy sites, basic principles of epidemic disease control, including vaccination, have been politicized and disparaged. Epidemiologists and infectious disease experts (as well as climate scientists) are now confronting *institutionalized* science denial. It is one thing to see your research-based advice ignored and quite another to be fired for it.

The anti-vaccination movement gets its basic energy from the fraught duties of parents to protect their children from harm. Additional animus comes from difficulties in explaining modern bioscience techniques like genetic modification and the vast and suspect expansion in the biotech industry's profits and consolidation.

False link to autism

The match that ignited anti-vaccination was a combination of increasing diagnoses (but not proven increased prevalence) of autism spectrum disorder and the infamous report from the Royal Free Hospital and Medical School in London linking the triple measles-mumps-rubella vaccination to 12 cases of severe autism. This report rattled around news outlets and the Internet for a decade before being proven a complete fabrication. The author's dishonesty in pursuit of personal gain was reviled in a jour-



nal retraction of his article, and he lost his medical license. But to this day, he is revered as a martyr by the anti-vaccine presence on the Web.

Law and better communication

To be fair, our public health agencies have not provided succinct readable information for each vaccination, or sufficient public service announcements. It has become clear that most people opposed to vaccinations are just uncertain, not hard-core refusniks. Answering their concerns does work to foster adherence to vaccination schedules. However, the greatest improvements in childhood vaccination rates have occurred in states that have eliminated religious and philosophical excuses for non-vaccination. It appears we have a long way to go to achieve optimal vaccination rates, and both better communication and the force of law will be required to achieve them.

rbertken@comcast.net

THESE PROPOSITIONS HAVE QUALIFIED for the NOVEMBER BALLOT

For more details go to *CalMatters* and enter “2020 state propositions” in their search bar

Prop. 14: Borrowing for stem cell research - Bond

What it would do: Borrow \$5.5 billion to fund stem cell research

Prop. 15: Split roll—Constitutional Amendment (CA)

What it would do: Tax some commercial property based on its market value, rather than the price at which it was purchased. This would raise property taxes on many large businesses across the state, increasing funding for schools and local government.

Prop. 16: Ending the ban on affirmative action CA

What it would do: Allow schools and public agencies to take race and other immutable characteristics into account when making admission, hiring or contracting decisions.

Prop. 17: Restoring the right to vote to people on parole CA

What it would do: Allow Californians who are currently on parole to vote.

Prop. 18: Letting (some) 17 year olds vote CA

What it would do: Allow 17-year-old U.S. citizens to vote in a primary and special election as long as they will turn 18 by the subsequent general election

Prop. 19: Property tax breaks CA

What it would do: Allow homeowners who are over 55, disabled or victims of natural disaster to take a portion of their property tax base with them when they sell their home and buy a new one.

Prop. 20: Rolling back Brown-era “leniency” CA

What it would do: Allow prosecutors to charge repeat or organized petty theft as a felony, require probation officers to seek tougher pen

alties for those who violate the term of their parole three times, and exclude those who have been convicted of domestic violence and certain nonviolent crimes from early parole consideration.

Prop. 21: Rent Control - Statute

What it would do: Allow cities to introduce new rent control laws, or expand existing ones.

Prop. 22: Self-employment for app-drivers—Statute

What it would do: Turn “app-based” drivers into independent contractors, exempting companies such as Lyft and Uber from standard wage and hour restrictions. It would also guarantee these drivers an earnings floor, a stipend to purchase health insurance and other minimum benefits.

Prop. 23: Regulating dialysis clinics—Statute

What it would do: Require dialysis clinics to have at least one physician on site at all times and to report patient infection data to California health officials.

Prop. 24: Stronger consumer privacy laws - Statute

What it would do: Strengthen California’s already strongest-in-the-nation consumer privacy law and establish a California Privacy Protection Agency to beef up financial penalties for violators and allow consumers to demand that personal information not be shared at all.

Prop. 25: Ditch or keep cash bail

What it would do: Ask voters to either approve or strike down a state law that banished money bail from the state criminal justice system.

Housing shortage may improve

by Marianne Kast

Is there any chance of reducing California’s 3.5 million unit housing shortage this year? “Yes,” says CA Senator Anna Caballero. “Maybe,” says CalMatters housing and data reporter Matt Levin. These housing experts were our guests for last month’s LWVF members’ meeting, held via Zoom.

With the pandemic raging and projected tax income falling short, Senator Caballero and Matt Levin reviewed some of the legislation that each house had to consider when they returned from recess late in July. At that time, there was just one month for bills to be approved by each house and sent to the governor for signature.

Among the most consequential are two bills, AB 1436 and SB1410, two different takes on providing tenant assistance to stave off a projected “tsunami of evictions” as a result of the pandemic and its resultant job losses. AB 1436 would enact a moratorium on evictions for non-payment of rent for 90 days following the lifting of the COVID state of emergency, whenever that occurs. SB 1410 offers a com-

plex way for landlords to receive payment and tenants to repay the State sometime later. SB1410 is supported by the building trades and may have the best chance of passing.

Housing for homeless Californians is addressed in two bills passed by the Assembly, now making their way through the Senate. One allocates \$2B for a continuum of care that includes shelters, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing, with the idea that it would be renewed annually. The other declares that children and families “have a right to housing,” and must be funded. Details are unclear about how this mandated policy would work.

Thirty other housing bills (16 for the Assembly to consider and 14 for the Senate) await action. From allowing by-right development on land owned by hospitals, colleges, and religious institutions, to encouraging housing development in underused commercial areas, and streamlining the approvals required for developing affordable housing, we may see incremental improvement to California’s housing crisis. Ultimately, though, no statewide legislation will make much difference if our local officials do not make affordable housing a priority. fourkasts@mail.com

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JOIN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS!

Men and Women age 16 and above Making Democracy Work

MISSION: The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of interested individuals and influences public policy through voter education and advocacy on issues. The League does not support or oppose any candidate or political party.

DIVERSITY POLICY: There shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the LWVF on the basis of race, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or socio-economic level.

What do you get when you join the League? All for one fee, you become a member of the Fresno, California and National Leagues and receive their newsletters. You may participate in League studies of issues; receive leadership training; hone your public speaking skills; become knowledgeable about local and state issues; learn more about government, natural resources and social policies as your time and interests dictate. You will also meet some interesting and friendly women and men who represent diverse backgrounds but find common ground in keeping abreast of current issues.

Yearly Dues Individual - \$70 ~ Family - \$100 (2 members, same address) ~ Student - Subsidized

**Please send your check payable to the League of Women Voters, Fresno, with registration form (below),
to: LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710.**

.....
Name _____ Ph. _____ E-mail _____

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