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The *Fresno* **VOTER**



Holiday Party

Sunday, December 3, 2-4 p.m.



Regular Board Meeting

Tuesday, January 16

5 p.m.—League Office

Program Planning Meeting

February

Date to be decided

Members and guests are always
invited to all League meetings
and events



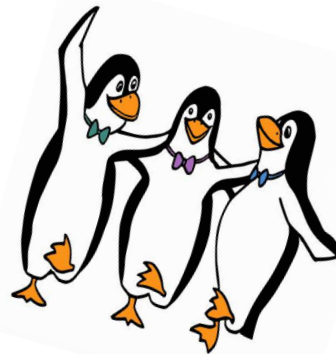
HOLIDAY PARTY

Sunday, December 3, 2 –4 p.m.

Home of Chris and Howard Watkins

1785 West Dovewood, Fresno

Members and Guests Welcome



Please bring a wrapped toy for distribution at Marjaree Mason Center

President's Message



When I was growing up in Los Angeles, riding the bus was THE ticket to freedom for those of us younger than driving age. There were no school buses provided except for field trips and for kids in the lower grades who had to cross the busy street that bordered my elementary school. Older elementary, junior high and high school public school students throughout the city rode the Los Angeles Rapid Transit District buses to get to school then, and they still do today.

Moving to Fresno renewed my interest in public transportation, but it was hard to figure out the FAX bus routes. Many were circuitous, eventually getting to where you wanted to go, but slowly. For the past 25 years though, I've lived a short walk from Shaw Ave. where there is frequent bus service that I use.

I attended one of last month's FAX public meetings seeking public input on the BRT Master Plan and regain ridership that has slipped over the past years. The public input portion of the meeting was very structured, but if I had a chance, here are some suggestions I would make to improve our local bus system:

- ◆ The fare is not the problem; paying is. Equip buses to accept debit/credit cards for payment, since coming up with exact change is a hassle.
- ◆ Focus on bus service to the parts of town that have inadequate parking and horrible traffic problems. Some examples:
 - * *Bus service to Fresno State should not only involve travel on Shaw and Cedar Avenues, but also on Barstow, Maple, and Chestnut Avenues. Delivery into campus would make it advantageous to ride the bus instead of driving.*
 - * *While buses run frequently on Blackstone, some serious hiking is needed to access the whole of the Riverpark shopping area from Blackstone. What about a shuttle around the shopping center's bordering streets on the weekends?*
 - * *Turn street side parking on the north and south sides of Shaw Ave. into bus only lanes between 7 to 9 a.m. and 3 to 6 p.m. on weekdays. That will make it faster to ride the bus than drive through traffic to work and school on Shaw.*
- ◆ Direct routes are needed from the airport to places travelers go, like Fresno State, the Amtrak/Greyhound Station, Riverpark, and Fashion Fair. The service needs to coordinate with the hours travelers are at the airport, particularly very early mornings, weekends, and at night.

On December 6 FAX will hold a wrap-up session to review the suggestions received at the public meetings. I'm anxious to hear what other bus travelers in Fresno have suggested.

- Marianne

The VOTER is a monthly publication of the League of Women Voters of Fresno
Mailing Address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710
Volume 76, No. 12 Editor: Francine Farber

Member News

Please edit your roster



New Member

Koko Fimbres
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432-2660
Koko9541@aol.com

Mary Perich, co-vice president for Voter Services, has resigned from our Board of Directors due to pressing personal obligations. We thank her for her service this year.

A donation to League makes a great birthday or holiday gift or as a memorial. Please make checks out to

LWVF
1345 Bulldog Lane
Fresno, CA 93710

The League is now a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization so your dues payments and donations are tax deductible and gratefully accepted.



Thank You!

Join a Priority Committee!

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

We are continuing to discuss the launch of the MyLO website. Liz Shields has agreed to be Content Manager for the site, since we believe that consistent editing will add to the appearance and value of the site.



We have looked at notes from League events in other cities and are thinking that we might partner with the downtown business association(s) to co-sponsor similar events.

Francine Farber has created a League Speakers Bureau featuring six League members who have offered to speak on various topics. The speakers are available to fraternal and other organizations who may be looking for presenters for their regular meetings. This is part of our work to engage citizens and advertise the work of the League.

Next meeting: To be announced

Chair: Marianne Kast: fourkasts@gmail.com



EDUCATION

We have finished our charter school visitations in Fresno and have completed written reports on individual schools. Now we are

planning to compile a mega-report on our research, which could be a lengthy enterprise. Fiscal information appears to be the most complex subject to understand and explain.

Next meeting: Fri, Dec 1, 9:30 a.m.

752 E Buckingham, Fresno

Chair: Kay Bertken: kayb@csufresno.edu

HOUSING

The Rental Housing Improvement Act was explained at a meeting sponsored by the Healthy Housing Community in partnership with Faith in the Valley and Councilman Luis Chavez. He said that rental property inspections would begin in early 2018. Renters were instructed to keep all documents and dates of complaints and to contact legal services. A representative of Central California Legal Services described the legal obligations and rights of owners and renters.



See additional housing article on page 5

Next meeting: to be announced

Co-Chairs: Marianne Kast: fourkasts@gmail.com

Nyla Zender: nylajz@comcast.net

Ask a friend to join LWVF



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Transportation

by Mary Savala



The Regional Transportation Round Table voted to adopt the least aggressive scenario for Sustainable Communities Strategies to reduced Green House Gas (GGH) emissions. All four scenarios proposed met a 13% reduction target in these emissions by 2035, and one of the scenarios proposed a 14% reduction and the largest protection of farm land, prevention of premature deaths, vehicle miles traveled per person, and largest number of housing units per acre of the four scenarios. It was almost identical in results for emission of pollutants, travel time, and growth in transit oriented development to the other three.

Public response dismissed

A survey conducted over approximately six weeks throughout the county at a sizable number of public venues and meetings, as well as an on-line survey, yielded approximately 1300 responses which preferred the aggressive land use scenario. The Round Table dismissed the public response as inconsequential, and several members were scornful of the ability of the public to express an informed opinion despite COG staff's careful efforts to provide information.

COG staff recommended the least aggressive approach as setting a low bar which would not be likely to trigger a response from the California Air Resources Board to raise expectations for greater GHG emission reductions in the future.

Concern about attitude toward public

Both advisory committees to the COG policy board also voted to adopt the least aggressive scenario, and the board is poised to vote on those recommendations. I sit on the Technical Transportation Committee and voted "no" on the staff recommendation. I spoke in behalf of League at the Round Table and also at the Policy Advisory Committee to the COG policy board about concerns for the cavalier dismissal of public opinion by bureaucratic members of those committees. Several others members of the envi-

ronmental justice organizations praised efforts of COG's staff to reach out to the public, and their dismay with the committee's response.

There are sound reasons for adopting the Sustainable Community Strategy scenario that was chosen as the best approach for Fresno County and its municipalities, but the tone of the discussion about the public survey was very troubling.



It has been a concern of civic organizations like the League that agencies meet the letter of the law and even go beyond, as in this case, to encourage and make provisions for public participation, but the responses and results of public input are dismissed and disparaged as inconsequential and unimportant. Treating public participation with indifference and ridicule may be the reason so many people feel they don't count, even to the point of not registering or voting.

Voter Services

by Jane Worsley



We will begin registering high school students after the first of the New Year. Petitions are already being circulated for ballot measures for the November 2018 election. You may recall that we had a large number in November 2016. One initiative would allow those on felony parole the right to register and vote. There are already many pros and cons on this measure. Another initiative is being circulated to increase the list of violent crimes and make changes to the recent series of laws intended to lower the overcrowded state prisons. 2018 will be a busy year for those interested in California politics.

Charter schools meeting yields information, more questions

by Francine Farber

Our *Chatter about Charters Lunch & Learn*, the first to use the Betty Rodriguez Library as a meeting place, yielded almost a full house of members and guests to hear three panelists supportive of the charter movement. LWVF's Education Committee has been studying and visiting charter schools locally as this topic is a League priority for the year.

Jeff Sands, Managing Regional Director for the California Charter Schools Association, noted that over three million students, about 6% of the nation's total, are being educated in charter schools. Locally over 6,000 students are in charters, with 1,400 on a waiting list, while 150,000 are on wait lists throughout the state.

He explained that charter schools are public schools for which the state has waived many of the voluminous Education Code rules to give freedom and flexibility to educators, to empower professionals, to provide parents with choices, to create competition with regular public schools, and to increase learning opportunities for low achieving students through innovative teaching methods.

Diego Arambula, an LWVF member who is the executive director of a new local education advocacy group called GO Fresno Public Schools, noted that the role of charters is to find models that are successful and spread them around. Among these are personalized learning with teachers as mentors and dual immersion (English/foreign language) programs. As a parent of two charter school children he has seen the engagement of the school's teachers

and the success of the restructuring of the school day.

Jeanne Pentorali, executive director of the Dailey Public School, spoke about the school's Primary International Baccalaureate Program which focuses on interdisciplinary studies and active learning. After three years the school was officially authorized as an IB provider and has been named a California Gold Ribbon School. It has an extended day from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Innovation and high expectations are the hallmark of Dailey with strong state testing scores by its students. Neighborhood children are 58% of the demographic. Some concerns that are being addressed are reaching out to secure a more diverse population and teacher turnover.



No new ideas forthcoming from study of homelessness

by Sylvia Woodburne



Householders pay such exorbitant rents that the slightest reversal in their income vs. expenses may result in them joining the ranks of the unsheltered homeless. This information was shared at a meeting at

the Central Valley Community Foundation last month which featured discussion of a consultant's report on *Updating Strategies to Reduce Homelessness*.

Among the statistics revealed was that in Fresno 54% of low income renters pay more than 30% for rent while 24% pay more than 50%. In the county 80% pay more than 30% for rent and 70% pay more than 50%. When compared with state statistics, Fresno City and County have a

lower local vacancy rate (2.2% vs. 4.8%), lower median income (\$49,000 vs. \$68,000), along with a lower two bedroom rental cost (\$890 vs. \$1600); surprisingly there is also a lower rate of homelessness per capita (17 vs. 30).

The report stressed that Fresno was doing the right things regarding identification, placement and supportive services for the homeless, but there was simply not enough funding to make significant changes, nor is there enough low income housing to meet needs.

A goal of the meeting was to identify strategies from other communities that tackled issues contributing to homelessness, and methods of increasing access to affordable rental housing. However, no ideas were presented to increase such housing.



NEXT FUSD BOARD MEETING

December 13 5:30 p.m.

VIEW IT STREAMING ON YOUR COMPUTER

Bargaining between the Fresno Teachers Association and Fresno Unified went to fact finding this month, but no report has been released. Teachers and the district met with state mediators for a couple of days, having been unable to reach an agreement themselves. FUSD has pledged to commit to the findings of the mediators; FTA has not made that commitment. The two proposals still differ to the tune of \$100 million dollars, according to Superintendent Nelson.

Report on sex ed survey

Board President Brooke Ashjian is still making news and some enemies with his reactions to the state-mandated sex education curriculum and the Bee's reporting of students opinions about the quality of school provided sex ed curriculum. The Bee's reporter surveyed students—with district permission—and found students indicating their exposure to the curriculum fell quite short of state mandated requirements. Ashjian has criticized the report and the reporter on social media. Community members—fewer in number—continue to attend some Board meetings asking that the Board remove Ashjian as president.

Good news surrounds the reports of progress at the District's "designated schools." There are now 40 elementary schools in FUSD under that name. These schools have higher than the already high number of students meeting the "at risk" definition. 95% of their students live in poverty, compared to 82% in the non-designated schools and 88% in the district overall. They also have 27% of their enrollees who are English Learners, compared to 16% in the non-designated schools and 23% in the district overall.

Added resources for at risk schools

The first ten of these schools were identified to receive special programmatic considerations in 2014-2015; twenty more were named in 2015-2016 and the final ten in 2016-2017. These 40 schools receive an additional 30 minutes a day of instruction-amounting to a full additional year by sixth grade. Each school has an additional teacher and up to ten extra days for teachers to plan together. Teachers at these sites receive a 12% salary boost.

The ten schools that have had the most experience with the

additional resources improved their scores more than 10 points greater than their comparison schools in math and 21 points greater in English Language arts.

Other reports to the Board this month included a review of this year's expenditures of Local Control Funding Formula dollars in preparation for public meetings to discuss next year's priorities. This year the district expanded dual immersion programs and is planning further expansion. There are expanded library hours on all campuses with staffing provided till at least 4pm. The new library hours have accommodated math and literacy tutoring, including online access to Kahn Academy programs as well as live tutors.

Additional initiatives include an expanded arts collaborative involving professional learning and a new program of student art exhibitions at a downtown gallery. Music is getting more attention, too. All third graders now get music instruction and the instrument repair and refresh program is alive and well. All high schools now have a soccer team pairing special education students with mainstream athletes

Efforts to reduce discrepancies

A new program this year is targeting the big discrepancy in achievement between the district's African-American students and others. Schools with relatively high concentrations of African American students now employ paraprofessional status "resource counselors" to work specifically with African American students. Every high school also now has a Black Student Union and provides enrichment activities and field trips for these students.

Other initiatives this year include five new school psychologists, expanded career-technical education, investments in computers, and partnerships with local groups to expand student involvement in school decisions.

The facilities division of the district has also been busy. Plans are being made for solar installations to reduce the schools' energy footprint and electrical bills.

Health Care

by Richard Bertken M.D.



We are approaching the 77th anniversary of FDR's Four Freedoms speech before Congress. In addition to citing First Amendment rights, he advocated freedom from fear (of the violence and chaos of war) and from want—for everyone in the world. It was an aspirational statement backing his vision of a United Nations. Freedom from the insecurity of poverty was a recurring theme in FDR's speeches. He challenged governments to provide economic opportunity, social security, and adequate health care.

Presidents died needlessly early

Three years later, he died of a cerebral hemorrhage. He died because of high blood pressure. There was no effective treatment for it, nor any consensus among the medical establishment about the urgent need to treat it. There was no vaccine against polio, which at age 39 ended his life as a totally independent, ambulatory person.

Other presidents were victims of medieval or non-existent (but now routine) medicine. Washington died of bloodletting. In office for four months, James Garfield, reputedly one of the great minds among our presidents, died of infections conveyed by doctors' non-sterile explorations of his modest gunshot wound. William McKinley died of an abdominal gunshot wound because intravenous hydration and nutrition did not exist. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers in the world wars died for the same reason.

I was born seventeen months after FDR died. While public health agen-

cies made wonderful advances in the first half of the twentieth century, the dawning relevance of medical practice to *everyone* happened during my childhood. The expansion of antibiotics including anti-TB drugs; the discovery and use of cortisone, anti-cancer drugs, and long-acting insulin; and the advent of open heart surgery and pacemakers—all occurred by the time I reached middle school. Since then, the value of personal medical care to the average citizen has grown exponentially.

When early social safety nets emerged in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, sickness insurance was primarily intended to maintain income rather than to cover medical expenses. Even death benefits—lump sum payments to survivors to cover funeral and short-term living expenses—were considered more important than health insurance. And why not? Death was all around, and doctors were mostly powerless to stop it. The best they could do was attend and prognosticate.

Expensive medical costs

By the time FDR was first elected, and despite the continuing futility of most medical care, there was a general appreciation that medical costs for workers were now exceeding the costs of lost income due to sickness. A consortium of major philanthropists assembled a blue ribbon panel that issued numerous volumes of documentation advocating government support of health insurance plans.

But the Social Security Bill of 1935 did not contain provisions for compulsory national health insurance because the core of the bill—*income support*—was itself novel and costly. Opposi-

tion by physicians was also an important factor. By the 1938 mid-terms, conservative successes marked the end of the progressive era. The National Health Act of 1939 that would have funded federal grants to states never had a chance of passing.

FDR's life probably could have been extended with modern medical treatment for high blood pressure and polio.



FDR's death—premature by today's medical standards—lends some irony to his failure to add “adequate health care” to his legacy. Harry Truman worked diligently on a truly universal national health plan, but was done in by anti-Communist rhetoric directed at “socialized medicine.”

Looking back at those times, I feel we were closer to achieving a consensus on how to achieve simplicity and equity in the distribution of health care than we are now. What is weird about this is that personal health care, because of its ever-increasing efficacy, is not only more important to us as part of our safety net portfolio, but is also surreptitiously merging with public health. Taking care of individuals with common chronic illnesses according to proven strategies is saving money and stabilizing society in the same way that immunizing and killing mosquitos and piping clean water saves money and stabilizes society. We all suffer when we ship some of our fellow humans back to the nineteenth century.

Dr. Bertken can be reached at Drbertken@comcast.net

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



At the November Behavioral Health Board (BHB) meeting, Deputy Director Susan Holt gave the Department of Behavioral Health Update. Two program reviews were included:

- ◆ The Multi-Agency Access Program (MAP) assesses clients and links them to the services that they may need to overcome barriers to wellness and recovery, such as mental and/or physical health, housing, substance use disorders, and social services.
- ◆ The Urgent Care Wellness Center (UCWC) is the “front door” for adult mental health services at DBH, and provides assessment, treatment planning, individual and group counseling, and linkage to community resources.

LPC Consulting Associates presented the Substance Use Disorders Prevention Services annual evaluation report. These three prevention programs directed at youth ages 10-25 were evaluated:



- ◆ Friday Night Live (alcohol use reduction)
- ◆ Performing Above The High (marijuana use reduction)
- ◆ Lock It Up Program (education, storage, and disposal of opioids).

Surveys were conducted in a number of public schools throughout the county. Positive results were shown for those young people who were involved in the programs.

There was discussion from the board about the Holistic Cultural and Education Wellness Center (Holistic Center). The suggestion arose that the outcome reports do not include adequate data to support the success of the program. The Department will give a full report at the December meeting.

Housing continues to be a high priority for the BHB. Some members feel that the Department is moving too slowly in the development and building of permanent supportive housing for individuals with mental illnesses. Six million dollars of Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) money designated for this purpose remains unused. It was agreed that the Department will provide a quarterly report on the progress in the creation of such housing, with the first report coming at the December BHB meeting.

Next BHB Board Meeting

Wednesday, December 20 * 2:30 p.m.

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