



Phone: 559-226-VOTE

Web site: LWVFresno.org

The *Fresno* **VOTER**



Monday, December 3
Independent Police
Reviewer
Lunch & Learn

Sunday, December 9
Holiday Party, 2 p.m.

Monday, January 14
Regular Board Meeting
5 p.m., League Office

Monday, February 11
Regular Board Meeting
5 p.m., League Office

Saturday, February 23
Annual Program Planning
Details to follow

***** REGULAR BOARD
MEETINGS ARE NOW HELD
on the SECOND
MONDAY of the MONTH
5 p.m., League Office
*All invited***



TWO S*P*E*C*I*A*L EVENTS

**Lunch & Learn with John Gliatta and
Maira Aguilar, Community Coordinator
OFFICE OF INDEPENDENT REVIEW**



Monday, December 3 * 11:30 a.m.

John Gliatta was appointed in 2017 as Independent Police Reviewer for the Office of Independent Review, which provides a neutral, third-party review of police policies, procedures, strategies, and internal investigations.

**High Sierra Grill
2003 West Bullard * Fresno * West and Bullard**



**Sunday, December 9
2:00—4:00 p.m.**



*Home of
Christine and Howard Watkins*

1785 West Dovewood * Fresno

Enjoy Good Food and Good Friends

See page 8 for donating items to young children at Stone Soup

North on West, Right on Browning, Right on Channing, Right on Dovewood

President's Message



As I write this, I am enjoying the end of my favorite time of the year. I'm not referring to Thanksgiving or any of the other upcoming winter holidays. I'm talking about Election Season. That is my favorite time of year!

I have long been interested in elections, in voter access, and especially in voters who do not vote. Way before I had any opinion about candidates or issues, I knew that voting was critical to how I would interact with the world outside my home.

Volunteering with the League has given me a look at the voting process that few others enjoy. I surely never knew the amount of work that it takes after Election Day to get every ballot counted. When I hear others ask disdainfully why it takes a month to certify election results, I see in my mind all the steps that many vote-by-mail and provisional ballots must go through in order to be counted. And when people casually remark that they're not sure if those ballots are EVER counted, I usually stomp my foot and respond angrily that they definitely are counted, at great expense and with much care by elections workers.

In the June election, there were five California counties that implemented the Voters Choice Act of 2016. They sent vote-by-mail ballots to all voters and established vote centers that were open for a week or more before election day. Those counties enjoyed an increase of about 5-10% in voter turnout above normal. That's an improvement, but I'm guessing that the vote center model will eliminate just about all provisional ballots, which is a more significant benefit. Since all vote centers will be able to verify registration and provide the correct ballot needed for every voter's residence address, there won't be any reason to cast a vote provisionally. That alone will improve the ballot counting process, as provisional ballots require many steps before they can be counted.

Its true that the increased number of vote-by-mail ballots will be a challenge to completing vote counts. If the most qualified staff were dispatched to the new vote centers, there would be plenty of former poll workers (and League members!) available to open and review the vote-by mail ballots.

Best wishes for a healthy and satisfying holiday season,

Marianne

The Voter is a monthly publication of the League of Wom-

MEMBER NEWS

Please edit your roster



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New Members

Nancy Mack

327 East Buck Way

Fresno, CA 93704

229-0511

nmack52@gmail.com

Patricia Stearns

34083 Shaver Springs Rd.

Auberry, CA 93602

stearnspatricia@gmail.com

Now is a great time for an end-of-year gift to the League. LWVF is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization so your gift is tax deductible and gratefully accepted.

**Checks should be sent to
LWVF
1345 Bulldog Lane Fresno,
93710**

Thank You

TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY

by Marianne Kast

When we hosted a regional meeting with Helen Hutchison, LWVpresident, recently, she outlined some of the barriers to the League's process of moving successfully into its second century of existence.

First, the League faces competition in its core work of civic engagement. Many organizations now compete for attention in the work in which the League specializes. Next, it is viewed as elitist, because of its traditional appeal to white, non-working women. The League is proud of its past successes, but has been reticent to try new approaches and form different partnerships to achieve its goals. On the local level, administrative demands have taken time away from core League work.

The League will remain a membership organization, and it will remain non-partisan. The work of educating voters and advocacy for issues will continue. Nationally, the work of streamlining the League's administration has begun with the emphasis on "joining at all levels." Currently, members join

locally and money flows from local leagues to LWVC and LWVUS through per-member payments. Ideally, members would join and based on where they live, money would flow to that local League, moving the management of membership to the national level.

At the state level, a Diversity and Equity Task Force has been created, partnering with organizations that could use the League's expertise in advocacy and from whom the League could gain perspective on issues not traditionally part of our work. Helen encouraged us to create events and partnerships we haven't tried before, that might fail, but from which we can learn and move on to successes.



A MESSAGE FROM HELEN HUTCHISON, LWVC PRESIDENT

We have come through one of the most toxic election cycles in memory. No matter how disheartened we feel, we need to challenge ourselves to make the difficult shift of renewed com-

mitment to each other for the valuable work we do as members of the League of Women Voters.

Many in our nation are losing faith in the foundations of our democracy. For us as members of the League, we know it is our mission to make a difference in our communities by protecting our democracy and empowering our voters. We are needed more than ever to guide and educate and to help rebuild trust in our institutions, just as we've been doing for nearly 100 years.

Restoring respect and reason to our public dialogue and collaboration will take *all* of us – *each* of us. Toxic, hateful words have consequences. We can all do better; we need to hold each other accountable when we fall short.

Taking small, powerful steps will change the tone in our own communities, and in time, the nation. It all begins with one small step.



Voter Services

by Liz Shields



My heartfelt thanks to the 47 League members and friends who volunteered to unfold ballots and staff the phone bank. Also my heartfelt gratitude to Francine whose article in the Fresno Bee prompted at least seven readers to call and volunteer their services, initially for the phone bank which she described in such beguiling terms, and also to unfold ballots when they found out what an interesting job that would be.

Hundreds of volunteer hours

Initial estimates indicate that we spent almost 500 hours unfolding ballots at the Elections Warehouse as well as 120 hours answering phones on and before Election Day. Our work for the Elections Department started early in response to an overwhelming number of phone calls from anxious voters who had not received their vote-by-mail ballots in a timely manner. This situation should alert both the Elections Department and the Post Office to take steps to avoid such voter anxiety in 2020 when all voters in Fresno County will receive vote-by-mail ballots.

Work continues with duplication of ballots set aside during the unfolding process due to voters' change of candidate or proposition choices, coffee stains and other irregularities which prevented the scanning machine from accurately recording their intent. We will also help with the audit of the polling place ballots. This will be the last activity before the vote count is sent to the Secretary of State on or before December 7.

Registration and presentations

League members registered about 700 high school students during October as well as reregistering residents of retirement homes who have moved there since the last election. In addition members made presentations on the propositions to local groups in churches, retirement homes and libraries.

Although the deadline for Voter Registration for this election was October 22, about 800 voters waited until Election Day to register or reregister, creating an unusu-

al sight outside the Elections Office between 6 and 7 p.m. of people sitting on any available space filling out voter registration forms. These voters were able to cast conditional ballots at the Elections Office following registration and their votes will be counted if it is determined that they are eligible. While it caused some headaches for the Elections Department on Election Day these people are now registered to vote in 2020.

eliz44@yahoo.com

Following are accounts of their volunteer Observer roles by two League members:



“The Fresno County Elections Office tries to protect the process from tampering/hacking and ensure everyone who is registered -- and wants to -- gets a chance to vote. Access to any ballot processing is strictly controlled, even for observers.

“The vote-by-mail ballots were opened by machine and signatures compared electronically with registration, with anomalies put aside for human assessment. Ballots were separated from envelopes for secrecy, before being brought to League volunteers for sorting.

“There is an emphasis on experience for precinct workers, but there are more slots than volunteers -- an issue that won't go away until the system becomes more vote-by-mail as planned for 2020. Training workers, getting materials to inspectors and equipment to polling places

(and collected afterward) is a complex process, but designed to protect the integrity of each ballot.”

Lanny Larson
Observer
(continued on page 5)

CCLS

Central California

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PATIENCE MILROD

Executive Director

2115 Kern Street, Suite 200

Fresno, CA 93721

O: 559.570.1214 * C: 559.790.6020

PMILROD@CENTRALCALLEGAL.ORG

Education

by Kay Bertken



ings Institute (*Brookings Brown Center on Education Policy*. “*What Do the 2018 Midterm Elections Mean for Education in America,*” *November 13, 2018*) and the Atlantic (*The Atlantic.com*. “*America is Divided by Education*” *November 7, 2018*) have highlighted implications for education.

Next Meeting: Wed. Dec . 12
In person or streaming on line

The FUSD Board was on hiatus for a few weeks during election season. There will be new faces on the Board beginning in December. Chris Delacerda lost his election to Veva Islas in the McLane area. Keshia Thomas will take over from the retired Cal Johnson in the Edison area, and Terry Slatik will replace Brooke Ashjian, who did not seek reelection in the Bullard region. Valerie Davis held her seat in the Sunnyside election.

Special education funding

In the final meeting of the current Board in November, the members engaged in passionate debate with staff and each other over recommendations for an additional million dollars in current year funding for special education. They seemed intent on outdoing each other in support of special education and criticizing the request as too little. It took some time, after many long trustee speeches, for staff to assure board members that this was not the request for upcoming budget proposals targeting the criticisms and recommendations of the recent review of Fresno’s special education services by the Council of Great City Schools (that report is available on the Fresno Unified website). This funding request was a supplement to current year allocations and to meet current pressing needs.

Some recent evaluations of the national election results by the Brook-

Oversight of Education Department

The Brookings report suggested that the new Democratic majority in the House might be more engaged with investigations and oversight of Betsy DeVos and the activities of the Department of Education. Areas of investigation might include whether states are implementing the mandates of the Every Child Succeeds Act (the successor to No Child Left Behind), particularly the provisions that require accountability for the tracking and success of racial and ethnic minorities, students from low income families and children with disabilities.

Changes in regulations

Other issues of potential investigation involve changes in regulation of for-profit colleges and Title IX policies related to sexual assault.

Flips in some state leadership suggest possible new attention in those states to universal preschool or more funding for education. The widely publicized teacher strikes in some states prior to the election seem to have influenced appreciation and support for teachers across the electorate.

Political divide grows

The *Atlantic* article took a higher level look at the growing education

divide between Republican vs. Democratic voters revealed in this election—the Democrats more firmly incorporating college graduates. This is a notable change from the historic class division of the parties—the Republicans traditionally regarded as the party of the upper social classes and the better educated. This election showed a complete flip of that division by education.

The article also proposed that the influence of education on voting behavior in the midterm votes was largely explained by the difference in voters’ attitudes toward immigration and comfort with ethnic diversity. Those attitudes were also highly correlated with education attainment—more acceptance associated with a college education and associated with votes for Democrats.

kayb@csufresno.edu

OBSERVER (cont. from page 4)

“Like the county elections office, the printing facility in Dinuba is secured with surveillance cameras and keypad locks. The whole process is a feat of logistics. Fresno County ballots are printed and stored in a room that requires every entering individual to record who entered the room and at what time. Overall I was impressed with the process. In the future, I’d be interested in sitting in on the training polling staff receive. I vote by mail, so I haven’t had many of my own personal experiences at the polls.”

-Linda Garcia
Observer

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



Board members conducted a Site Visit to the Perinatal Wellness Center, located at the West Fresno Regional Center. At the board meeting the Department presented the Outcomes Report. This program is “in-house” and staffed by Department of Behavioral Health employees.

The Perinatal Wellness Center provides services to mothers and fathers who are experiencing symptoms of Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders or Postnatal Depression. If left untreated these disorders can have long-term, adverse affects on parents, babies, and other family members. Most referrals come from obstetricians and public health nurses. Services can be provided in the home, at the office, or at other community locations of the client’s choice.

Childcare is provided on site, so that parents can focus on their recovery while participating in treatment. Staff include mental health clinicians, infant mental health specialists, case managers, psychiatrists, and public health nurses. Treatment plans usually extend to the infants’ first birthday, but can be continued as necessary. Program staff are pleased to report that in 8 years of service,

there have been no maternal suicides or infanticides among their clients. Board members were impressed with the caring attitude of the staff and their outstanding outcome results.

The frequent readmission of children after discharge from the Central Star Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) has been identified as a significant problem. The Department began a Performance Improvement Project in 2017 focusing on youth not linked to behavioral health services prior to hospitalization. The plan was to improve care coordination with communication and more timely follow-up with clients.

After tweaking the plan by improving communication between social workers and case managers, with the addition of a 7-day follow-up assessment and short-term therapy until the youth was transitioned to ongoing treatment, a significant reduction in readmissions was observed. The conclusion is that a warmer hand-off and connecting youth with services during the first week post-discharge leads to more successful treatment and reduces readmission to inpatient psychiatric hospitals.

The Board is studying results of both its self-evaluation and public evaluations to improve the work that it does and to become more effective and more inclusive.

Water News

by Diane Merritt



environmental social justice organizations to establish a safe and affordable drinking water fund.

Legislation to establish a Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund did not pass during the 2017-18 legislative session, as reported previously. It will be re-introduced in the 2019-20 session.

The Human Right to Water Act, passed by the California legislature in 2012, states that “every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes.” LWVC has supported this legislation and efforts by

A major barrier to providing safe drinking water to all communities is the ongoing cost for operation and maintenance of wells, distribution systems, and modern water treatment technologies, especially in small, rural, and isolated communities with low household incomes and few households to spread out infrastructure costs. Typically government bond funding provides funds for construction of facilities, but not for ongoing operation and maintenance. The 2017-18 legislative effort aimed to address the water infrastructure funding gap in rural communities by including a charge of less than \$1 per

month on water users’ bills. The concept is similar to charges on phone and utility bills to assist low income households. A feature that was included in the 2017-18 legislation was an option for water users to opt out of paying the charge. There were also provisions for agriculture to pay a share of the costs for mitigating agricultural-related pollution.



For more information: The November 2018 Public Policy Institute report on *California’s Water* includes a section on providing safe drinking water. The report is available online at PPIC’s the Institute’s website.



I have had lifelong hay fever—pollen allergies. After years of dealing with it, my residual problem is vision impairment due to chronic conjunctivitis. There are medicines for this, but my exploration of the world of ocular anti-allergy medications has again set me—and hopefully you—on another mission to fix Big Pharma.

For years the antihistamine pheniramine appeared in various brands of “allergy eye drops” along with a decongestant. Like all early antihistamines, pheniramine blocked histamine—a small molecular wrecking ball—from landing on its receptor. Both components of early allergy eye drops were very short-acting, and the net result was rebound swelling and irritation. In the last decade of the 20th century, drug companies worked assiduously on producing antihistamines with longer durations of action and on designing drugs that blocked the release of histamine from its chief producers, mast cells. As it turned out, some of their new products worked at both sites of histamine activity.

Eye drops are expensive

The FDA approved the first of these combination agents, ketotifen, in 1999 for ocular use. By 2007, the product was approved for over-the-counter (OTC) use. At your local drugstore, ketotifen drops cost about \$14 per month’s supply; in Canada, about \$7. During this first decade of the 2000’s similar products emerged, but none have gone OTC and most have remained very expensive or exorbitant—retail up to \$200 per month in the U.S. or \$50 per month in Canada. Two questions emerge: why are these eye drops not OTC? Why are they so expensive?

Getting to over-the-counter

Request for conversion to OTC status is not limited to the marketer of a drug product. The FDA itself initiated conversion to OTC once in the early 1980’s and regretted the negative reaction. In 2001 WellPoint Health Networks, a health insurance plan, asked the Food and Drug Administration to make the leading prescription antihistamines—Claritin, Allegra and Zyrtec—OTC. Like most insurance plans, Wellpoint did not cover OTC medications and stood

to save megabucks with the conversion. The FDA punted on this action, in part because of the financial interests of the petitioner. But the process of deliberation on this issue established that the FDA could rule on OTC conversion administratively, without adjudication. This facilitated later OTC conversions of all prescription oral antihistamines, of nasal cortisone products, and of Plan B (levonorgestrel), the “day after” pill.

Profit motivation

The drug marketers still hold the key to OTC conversion, and their motivation is guided by profit. When they step into the OTC world they are accessing a much larger clientele, but they are entering a free market in which their sales strategies are upended. Advertising costs increase and prices decline in a competitive market. They may be putting their product up against established, cheap OTC products like ketotifen. They are now employing Madison Avenue, not pharmaceutical representatives. No more back door negotiations with pharmacy benefit managers. No more pen and pencil sets (or mouse pads) for their targeted physicians.



From the other side, the sum of OTC conversions saves the American consumer billions of dollars in costs for drugs and health professional services as well as in personal time.

What explains the vast differences in retail prices for a new generation of ocular anti-allergens? Why are some retailing at \$200 per month and others at \$25 per month? Published studies do not point to clear differences in effectiveness, although there are few head-to-head studies. At the moment, I cannot explain the differences except by offering an anecdote: all my visits to my eye doctor have resulted in my receiving samples of the most expensive products.

Drbertken@comcast.net

Happy Holidays!

Priority Reports



Reports on the work of Priority Committees established at the Program Planning meeting last February

HOUSING

We discussed the need to preserve old buildings and convert them to affordable housing as well as finding ways to build new housing. The economy is at risk when large groups of people do not have safe, healthy affordable housing.

Newly elected governor Gavin Newsom made affordable housing a big issue in his campaign. We plan to develop a position paper outlining the lack of affordable housing and suggest to Newsom that he make the Fresno area serve as a model for a solution to the affordable housing crisis. We hope to invite Ashley Swearingin, CEO of the Central Valley Community Foundation and the Valley advisor to Newsom's transition team, A.J. Jauregui from the CSUF Real Estate Center, and Ashley Werner from the Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability to assist in writing the paper and then present it to Newsom and State Senators Arambula and Wiener.

nylajz@comcast.net

EDUCATION

We sent out the charter school report to a broad audience. The California Charter Schools Association's central California administrator was interested in and largely in agreement with the report. The report was cited in the Mad-dy Daily. We received letters of



thanks from two FUSD Board members--Chris DelaCerde and Elizabeth Jonasson-Rosas-- and the Superintendent of University High. The Bee reporter indicated she would read it and get back to us. We have heard nothing back from the superintendents in Fresno County or any of the charter schools (with the exception of University High) or the California Department of Education, who were the objects of many of our concerns and the targets of our recommendations.

Once the newly elected candidates are sworn in, we will send it to elected officials in our area and to the new State Superintendent and State Board of Education Chair. We are working through LWVC to distribute the report to local leagues. Kayb@csufresno.edu

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

We have been working with students in Mass Communications and Journalism at Fresno State to produce an informational video about the League and its work.



We may be able to view that finished piece at the League Holiday Party this month.

We also videotaped four 30 second spots that should be on our website in December. Feedback has been positive about our weekly newsletter which reminds League members about the work we do year-round, and encourages additional participation in those areas.

Many thanks to Jacquie Canfield and Cathy Caples who kept our website up to date despite other time-consuming obligations during the elections.

fourkasts@gmail.com

THIS YEAR AT OUR HOLIDAY PARTY WE ARE COLLECTING GIFTS FOR THE CHILDREN AT STONE SOUP.

PLEASE CONSULT OUR WEBSITE, OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER AND FACEBOOK FOR A LIST OF ITEMS THEY ARE REQUESTING FOR THEIR CLASSROOMS

THE LIST WILL BE POSTED SOON. KEEP LOOKING!



IT'S ALMOST

PROGRAM PLANNING TIME AGAIN!

The three priorities of **Housing, Education** and **Civic Engagement** were selected for emphasis this year by you, our members, at the **Program Planning** meeting last February.

On **February 23** we will engage in the **Program Planning** process once again. Please send us your thoughts on what we should be considering both locally and on a national League level.

See you at the meeting on February 23!

So the Board can begin to research them, please e-mail your ideas **before January 10** to Pat Campbell at Soupsbooks5@comcast.net or Marianne Kast at fourkasts@gmail.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.

.....
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