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**Monday, December 8**  
**Regular Board Meeting**  
**4 p.m. via ZOOM**

**Monday, January 10**  
**Regular Board Meeting**  
**4 p.m. via ZOOM**



**The**

**FRESNO**

**VOTER**

*Our 80th Year!*

*Your input, your future*

## **Redistricting: challenge of the decade**

by Sue Goldman and Judi Steele

When practiced properly, redistricting is a great tool to ensure that all our voices count, and count equally. This is your once-in-a-decade opportunity to have your voice heard in the process.



The California Redistricting Commission (CRC) released three sets of visualization district maps last month and held several public input meetings. These maps can be found on the CRC website under past meeting handouts for October 27-29, November 2-4, November 7-9)

After those meetings the line drawers, at the direction of the CRC Commissioners, came up with draft maps that incorporated public input which they approved and released November 11. The draft maps PDFs can be found at [https://www.wedrawthelinesca.org/draft\\_maps](https://www.wedrawthelinesca.org/draft_maps).

These are by no means the final maps and several more meetings will be held to review additional public input, draw more district map visualizations, get more public input and do live line drawing of final maps which need to be released by December 23. There will then be a three-day waiting period before the Commission holds its last meeting on December 27 and sends final maps to the state legislature for certification.

You are encouraged to look at the maps and give input either verbally at CRC line drawing meetings or written. This is especially important as the latest versions have congressional and senate districts going from parts of the city of Fresno down to Inyo County. The CRC will be having line drawing meetings on December 1 – 4 and December 6– 19

### **COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

There has been a great deal of comment by the Fresno Bee about displeasure with the county's redistricting process. The League has expressed similar comments both verbally and in writing to the Supervisors. At the beginning of the process some members of the

*(continued on page 3)*

## President's Message

Last month, to the chagrin of many, the Fresno County Board of Supervisors voted to accept a nearly status quo redistricting map for the next 10 years. Many who follow how our supervisors work were not surprised; the Fresno County redistricting process was flawed from the beginning.



A new feature highlighting monthly Board activities

November 2021

### DONATIONS

**A generous donation was made to the League from the estate of Robert and Shirley Valett.**

**Centennial:** The 100 Notable Women exhibit at the Fresno Art Museum was a big success and well attended. Plans for the world premiere of the suffrage-based choral work are ever-changing due to the pandemic. Should be announced soon.

**Program Planning:** We are hoping for a discussion on Guaranteed Basic Income.

**Voter services:** Redistricting participation is a priority. We are monitoring it closely and have concerns about some of the governmental entities and their loose interpretation of what they need to do,

**FC General Plan:** Radley Reep has asked people to sign up to get his weekly updates about sections of the Fresno County General Plan.

**Nominating Committee:** Discussion of next year's needs and difficulties in filling key positions. Please submit nominations now for president or any other position.

**Behavioral Health:** The Community Forum planned earlier in October on school services and general behavioral health information was postponed until October 21 due to lack of publicity resulting low attendance.

**Donations are always accepted for the RBG Scholarship Fund at San Joaquin College of Law, the League's general fund, and any other purpose. Donations for RBG should note RBG in the memo line. Please make out checks to LWVF and send to Treasurer, LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane,**

First, the amount of money allocated to the once-a-decade process was meager. Then, the selection of members of the Advisory Redistricting Commission by the supervisors themselves foretold that there would be little advocacy for changing district lines. Outreach to the public about redistricting was tepid, with Latino and Asian-American groups particularly vocal about the lack of publicity for the process.

Local community-based organizations worked hard to encourage participation by their clients, and eventually, the public workshops saw dozens of residents testify to the lack of services in their particular communities, to the discord between their community and others lumped together with them in the same district, and to their need for a supervisor who understands their worldview.

About 20 maps were submitted by the public, including a last-minute entry and two consultant-drawn maps showing only enough change to equalize population across the five districts. Predictably, the Advisory Redistricting Commission recommended, and then the Board of Supervisors "tweaked," and approved one of these nearly unchanged maps.

Angry county residents filled the Supervisors' chambers at two meetings where the maps were presented, then decided on. Clearly, public opinion was not going to sway the elected officials, for whom reelection is paramount, and keeping the same district lines is the safest way to accomplish that.

The most satisfying recourse to this redistricting travesty would be to vote the incumbents out of office, but the design of the districts has proven that hard to accomplish so far. Despite substantial majorities of Latino residents in three supervisorial districts, there is only one Latino among our supervisors.

A second and much longer-range plan is to insist on independent redistricting in our county. No amount of convincing will get our supervisors on board with this; this will require a ballot initiative from County residents. We have ten years, until 2031, to make this happen. Anybody up for the fight?

—Marianne

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

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## Redistricting *(Continued from page 1)*

BOS stated that they saw the need for very little change from current district boundaries. Twenty-two maps were submitted with 19 being considered legal by the consultant. Three of the maps were drawn by the consultant as per contract. The maps were presented to the commissioners at an October meeting, which unfortunately resulted in hostility with yelling and name-calling.



A great deal of the dialogue was directed at the map developed by the Dolores Huerta Foundation developed map. Many people spoke in favor of this map, more than any other map. However, some of the commissioners stated that this was a partisan map. This map was developed with other non-profit organizations. Another map was submitted by a different coalition. Very little analysis was provided by the consultant in terms of how the maps met the Voting Rights Act and Fair Maps Act, other than population variance and numbers of minorities in each district, as well as voting age population by ethnicity. There was limited discussion of the maps. The commissioners decided to recommend three maps to the BOS, two by the consultant and one developed by a Republican operative that showed little variance from current maps.

**THE FINAL VOTE WILL TAKE PLACE ON DECEMBER 14.**

When the BOS met twice in November to discuss the maps, many people came out in support of the Dolores Huerta map. At the first November meeting the board voted to move ahead with the Republican drawn map but requested that the consultant make some adjustments to it. At the second November meeting the board voted to move ahead with one of the five variations as a first reading. There was one no vote. This map makes only minor changes to current district boundaries to account for population changes. The final vote will take place on December 14.

### FRESNO CITY

The next Fresno City redistricting meetings will be held on December 2 and December 9, both at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall.

## Climate Change

by Andrea Farber De Zubiria



The City of Fresno recently passed an updated plan to reduce the production of greenhouse gases that are responsible for global warming. According to the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan, approximately 3 million tons of greenhouse gases were produced within the City of Fresno in 2016; this increased to roughly 3.1 million tons in 2020. Following state guidelines, the goal is to implement strategies to reduce the emissions to less than 2 million tons/year by 2030.

The City's plan relies on the County General Plan, which responds to state requirements and is being updated at this time. The City plan includes such things as land use, transportation, water use and waste management.

Some of the strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the plan:

**Promote "smart growth"** so people live closer together and closer to their work, shopping, recreation and school destinations to reduce "vehicle miles traveled." The vehicle miles traveled threshold adopted this year is 13% lower than the existing threshold for both residential and commercial buildings. There is a plan to permit second units on residential lots as one way to help meet this goal.

**Zoning changes** to increase mixed use projects along bus rapid transit lines such as Shaw Ave, Blackstone Ave, Kings Canyon/Ventura Ave and make this transit more functional and desirable (for example, with improved appearance and comfort of bus stops), add more bus stops in the Fresno State campus core, use zero emissions busses and city vehicles

**Promote "complete streets"** to improve infrastructure for walking and bicycles

**Give incentives to developers** that adhere to Energystar standards

**Advertise incentives for solar projects** and make the permitting process easier, promote commercial and residential transition to more energy efficient appliances and improved hot water systems

*(continued on page 5)*

# Education

by Kay Bertken



Much of the news around Fresno Unified School District concerns poor morale among teachers and the difficulties associated with staffing to accommodate the high absentee rates among employees. Superintendent Nelson reported that the previous week there were 5,000 absent positions. The district has hired 66 new substitute teachers but administrators are still being called to cover classes, and teachers are distressed at having to cover classes in addition to their own. The district is competing for substitute hires with all the neighboring districts, which are experiencing the same problems.

## Instruction vs. teacher prep time

The morale issues extend beyond the class coverage issue. The challenges of in-person learning when students are coming in and out of the classroom from quarantine and require distance access to the class while away have added to the complexity of making up for last year's lost time. The FTA has requested additional prep time within the school day, but parents are concerned that their children might lose instructional time if such an agreement were made. The superintendent is wrestling with the incompatible demands of required instructional minutes and the teachers' requests.

More than 4,000 students are now utilizing ELearn, the district's online learning platform. Teachers have had to



found quickly to accommodate that program which requires scheduled time with a teacher in addition to the online programming. The

number of students opting for that program has increased way beyond the sign-ups at the start of the school year.

## Community input for redistricting

The Board is soliciting community input for redistricting the trustee areas. Currently none of the areas have population changes in the 2020 census that exceed the 10%

wiggle-room allowed for population balance. Historically each trustee has had one of the comprehensive high schools within their area and so identifies with that high school.

The district has funding for big increases to after-school, winter and summer programs—an exciting prospect for extending learning time. Big increases in the costs of construction have impacted the reach of the recent Bond Measure M's funds. The Board voted to remove the \$25 million dollar cafeteria project at Fresno High. Staff recommended prioritizing that project in the next bond. The Board has established a committee to draft a policy regarding the naming and renaming of facilities. That committee will begin meeting at the end of November.

The Board gave Superintendent Nelson a positive evaluation, with Trustee Slatic dissenting.

## Focus on civic education

Beyond Fresno Unified, LWVF continues to participate in community groups that have an educational focus. The Civic Education Partnership recently held its latest youth dialogue webinar, this time with a focus on environmental issues. Students interacted with a panel that included CSUF students, the head of Tree Fresno and a representative of Climate Fresno. The Democracy Center's December youth summit will involve students from area schools coming together to practice civil dialogue. They will identify challenges and opportunities for engagement in issues that they identify as important and develop service projects as they acquire the tools to socialize and make decisions in a caring community

The Children's Movement (TCM) has established a Resident Council composed of 100 parents from around the county. The council represents the completion of a bridge from the clients of community youth services through TCM and its network to the Cradle-to-Career Partnership of education, government, justice, business, and philanthropy heads in Fresno County—a pipeline of communication to the decision makers who shape policy and funding.

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## Health Care

by Richard Bertken, MD



Healthcare Quote of the Month: “**Ben True, elite long distance runner:… crammed his schedule full of races and competed in the 5,000 meters at the 2019 World Championships with an Achilles’ tendon injury. He should have taken time off, he said, but he was worried about losing his health insurance if his world ranking dipped.**” According to Mr. True, one must retain their top-20 standing in their key event to retain employee benefits granted by the U.S. Olympic Committee.

In his marathon debut, Mr. True finished seventh in a time of 2:12:53—an excellent performance for a novice marathoner on a notoriously slow course. Let’s hope that the USOC agrees that he should continue to get their employer-based healthcare. Even better would be to stop its perverse incentive that may drive elite athletes to over-train in the face of injury.

### Needless complexity

The American healthcare landscape is rife with perverse incentives and needless complexity. As of 2021, 12 states have not accepted the Affordable Care Act Medicaid expansion. In those states, a family of four may qualify for Medicaid only with an annual income of under \$10,000 (less than 50% of the threshold poverty line). People without children do not qualify at all. The remaining poor, hopefully with affordable transport, would depend on state-sponsored charitable hospitals and, for ambulatory care, Federally Qualified Health Centers.

In ACA Medicaid expansion states, families making below 113% of the

poverty line (state average \$30,000 /year for family of four) may receive Medicaid benefits that vary widely from state to state and county to county. Overall, Medicaid recipients are underserved.

### Minimal out-of-pocket costs

But the great Medicaid advantage is that out-of-pocket (OOP) costs are minimal. If a person or family does not qualify for Medicaid because of higher income, they have the option of buying insurance through the ACA exchanges, assisted by graded government subsidies. If they have pre-existing chronic conditions, they may find that copays and deductibles with these plans generate OOP costs beyond their budget.

Then there is this: unlike Medicare, your Medicaid card in one state does not grant you Medicaid services in any other state, even in an emergency. If you need Medicaid services in another state, you need to apply all over again and meet the qualifications for *that* state.

At its inception in 1965, Medicare was a straightforward government-managed health plan for the disabled and elderly. Over the ensuing 56 years, the federal government progressively limited medical services fees and coverages and increased premiums out of fiscal necessity.

### Support for premium payment

If you cannot afford Medicare premiums, there are four programs that may help you pay for them. Since 1997 seniors have been offered region-limited Medicare Advantage

Plans, which receive average annual Medicare payouts and then offer, for additional premiums, extra services such as vision, dental, and hearing care. Twelve percent have dual coverage with Medicaid. Ten percent are either too poor and/or uninformed about the danger of being old and underinsured or are so rich it doesn’t matter.

This diverse recitation is intended to expose the needless complexity, redundancy, and opacity of American health care. Also, the very poor and the very old have this in common: they are most vulnerable to the entanglements of our current system, but they consume most of U.S. health care dollars. These are populations for which our country must build some uncomplicated and comprehensive solutions, if not for everybody.

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## CLIMATE CHANGE

**Promote use of greywater systems** for landscaping and gardening (especially golf courses) and water conservation in general ( water pumping and transportation uses 20% of California’s energy!)

**Expand the yard waste program** to divert more compostable items away from landfills where they give off methane and carbon dioxide

**Continue to expand the** city’s current efforts to use low emission vehicles, have new buildings meet state standards, enhance recycling efforts, update heating and lighting, increase the use of urban trees, improve access to electric vehicle chargers. [afarberdezub@gmail.com](mailto:afarberdezub@gmail.com)

## *Behavioral Health*

by Carolyn Evans



At its November meeting the Behavioral Health Board said good-bye to the Director of the Department of Behavioral Health Dawan Utecht, who is leaving to pursue a position in the private sector. Director Utecht has done a masterful job in leading the Department and expanding services for its clients. Deputy Director Susan Holt will serve as Interim Director.

A public hearing was held on the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Innovation Projects. Those include (1) the Community Planning Process for creating the annual plan; (2) The Lodge, which houses individuals in crisis who are not yet ready to accept mental health services; (3) the evaluation of Full-Service Partnerships that provide services to clients with higher needs; and (4) Psychiatric Advance Directives for clients to have a plan in place in case of a mental health crisis. The Board approved submission of this portion of the Annual Update required by MHSA. The completed Annual Update is in process.

The Board conducted a virtual site visit to Central Valley Regional Center (CVRC) in November. CVRC is one of 21 centers throughout the state that help individuals with developmental disabilities to reach their goals. It serves children and adults who are substantially handicapped due to intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and autism. The onset of the condition must have been prior to the age of 18. The Center refers, links, and coordinates services with other agencies, but does not provide direct services itself.

The Fresno office serves over 12,000 individuals (60% adults), and of those approximately 400 also are clients of the Department of Behavioral Health with co-occurring disorders. Liaisons from each agency communicate to coordinate care for mutual clients, though the process is not as smooth as it could be.

The Board voted to continue holding virtual meetings, as allowed by the state during the pandemic. Hybrid meetings are a possibility for the new year.

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## *Water News*

by Diane Merrill



California's climate is highly variable and climate models predict increasingly warmer temperatures, decreased snowpack, and more frequent intense periods of drought followed by short, concentrated wet periods that may result in flooding.

According to the Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the Fresno/Clovis area, an estimated 87% of the area's surface and groundwater comes from the Kings River. PhD hydrologist David Cehrs did a statistical study of annual precipitation and Kings River flow data over the 124 year period from 1896 to 2020. He found that both the highest and the lowest recorded Kings River flows have occurred since 1978. Recharging overdrafted groundwater aquifers during wet periods is essential for maintaining our local water supplies and improving drought resiliency.

Groundwater recharge basins have been constructed in the Kings River area since the 1930s, but faced with worsening drought conditions additional basins are needed. There are thousands of well owners and many communities in the Kings Subbasin that are dependent on groundwater. Small communities, rural residents and small farmers are the most vulnerable to well failures. Situating recharge basins near groundwater-dependent communities can improve groundwater levels and water quality and decrease the potential for well failures

Since January 2020, water agencies in our local Kings Groundwater Subbasin have completed, or are in the process of developing, fifteen groundwater recharge basins on 600 acres of prime groundwater recharge land. Five of these recharge areas are located near the Kings River between Laton and Lemoore to take advantage of high Kings River flows during wet years.

This year, local water agencies have been able to obtain grant funding from the California Department of Water Resources for construction of recharge facilities near three disadvantaged communities located near the City of Fresno, and in Kerman and Parlier.

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