

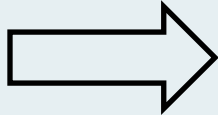
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Sunday, December 8  
Holiday Party  
Details here



Monday, December 16  
Regular Board Meeting  
4 p.m. Stone Soup

Monday, January 13  
Regular Board Meeting  
4 p.m. Stone Soup




JUNE 19



**THE**

**FRESNO**

**VOTER**



*Our 84th Year*

# HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Please join us for Friends and Food  
Sunday, December 8 \* 3–5 p.m.

Generously hosted by  
**Angela and Michael Presto**  
**1526 West San Jose \* Fresno**

Appetizers and desserts lovingly contributed by Board members  
*Please bring an unwrapped gift for preschoolers at Stone Soup*  
*Clothing, Toys, Gift Cards welcome*

*Please join us at a board meeting and find out more about what the League does and how you can help.*

## Co-president's Message

by Kay Bertken



### November Board Minutes

**Training:** Board members will participate in zoom meetings by the national LWV to receive training in new procedures for membership, dues and other areas.

**Volunteers:** The event to honor election volunteers is scheduled for Stone Soup on November 16.

**Procedures:** Last month's minutes need to be updated to include the subsequent support for only Measures H and 2, rather than all school bond measures, after it was decided that we didn't have enough information about all the other measures to come to a thoughtful decision.

**Holiday event:** Our annual Holiday Party will be held on December 8 at the home of Angela and Mike Presto. We will ask participants to bring gifts for Stone Soup children based on a list it will provide of most needed items.

**FCRTA:** Moses Stites, Executive Director of the county's Rural Transportation Authority, explained that the high per person and hourly cost of providing trips have made it impossible to sustain the program which we had supported with a gift of \$12,000 to subsidize the ride cost by 50%. An alternative is to use the remaining funds to purchase an electric vehicle for the Biola Service District so it can recruit volunteer drivers. Instead we asked Moses to develop other possibilities while we also research rural transportation ideas.

**Measure C:** The group working on developing a new ballot measure seems to be repeating past language. The possibility of reaching out to the community through grants of \$50,000 to local organizations is being discussed

**Mural:** A draft of a contract between LWVF and the artist was discussed. A number of comments and questions resulted in a decision to ask Attorney Patience Milrod if she would review the document for editing.

**Lawsuit:** Radley Reep reported that his research showed many documents missing from the County's administrative record for its General Plan. (see page 8)

**LWVF is a 501 c3 non-profit organization and all donations, including dues, are tax deductible. Your estate planning is encouraged to consider LWVF. Please make out checks to LWVF and send to Treasurer, LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA, 93710. Donations are always accepted for the RBG Scholarship, memorial gifts, and the general fund.**

**R**ight after the election, the National League posted this message.

"Last week, the 2024 presidential election was decided. Donald Trump will again become President of the United States. He won both the Electoral College and the popular vote, and when that happens, it means the voters have spoken.

"Like you, we are still processing the implications of this election. Thanks to the tireless efforts of election workers and other democracy defenders, the election worked in many positive ways. Voter turnout was the second highest it's been in the past century, eclipsed only by the 2020 election."

We in the Fresno League witnessed firsthand what care and attention went into this election. Many thanks go to League members and supporters who worked to get out the vote, unfold ballots and answer phones to make this enterprise work the way it is supposed to—whether the outcomes are what we each supported or not.

Now it is time again to work to defend the democracy that our elections support. The National League is already back at it, asking members to support its "Making Democracy Work" agenda: reduce money's political influence, protect the freedom to vote, fight for fair redistricting and against racial gerrymandering. They are also organizing a national study of the federal judiciary. Be prepared to join in that study in the new year.

Right now, they are asking that we contact our Congressional representatives to support the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and urge them to address climate change and protect our youth. There is so much left for us to do on the national level and here locally.

*Kay*

The Voter is a monthly publication of the LWV Fresno

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Volume 65 No. 12 Editor: Francine M. Farber

## Education

by Kay Bertken



It looks like a very positive election for the many Fresno County school districts that put school bonds on the ballot. With 7100 conditional ballots and ballots to be copied due to irregularities plus 5,400 ballots requiring signature verifications, it seems all will have passed with more than the required 55% of the vote.



Fresno Unified's measure has passed handily, with more than 60% positive votes. That result is somewhat surprising

given the organized opposition to the measure, including from the Fresno Unified board president, and the feeble public campaign in support of the bond.

The Fresno Teachers Association was particularly engaged in this year's FUSD elections. Its current contract with the district specified a third of any bond money raised by Measure H would go to its priorities. The union also organized the Measure H campaign effort through its organization of "Educators and Community for Outstanding Schools-Yes on H-Sponsored by Fresno Teachers Association." That organization collected contributions but did little publicity to support the bond, including failing to write a pro statement for the ballot measure, post yard signs or banners, or distribute much in the way of mailers.

The Teachers Union also poured thousands of dollars into the campaigns of challengers to two incumbent trustees, Andy Levine and Claudia Cazares. Levine appears to have won his race while Cazares is 153 votes behind her opponent as of this writing.

Post election, the work of the school board has continued with consideration of charter school renewal petitions. Ten charter schools are authorized by FUSD, and four are up for renewal this academic year: University High, Aspen Valley, Aspen Meadow and Sierra Charter. *(continued on page 8)*

## Behavioral Health

by Sherri Gibson



The Care Act which began on December 1 creates a new pathway to provide services for schizophrenic or other psychotic disorders.

Family members and first responders can file a petition with the court to have the Department of Behavioral Health provide services. While this is court connected, the services are voluntary. To be eligible the client must be unlikely to survive safely in the community without supervision, or services are needed to prevent deterioration. There is support for housing, but no increase in resources.

Proposition 36 recently passed and will include "treatment mandated felonies", a new category of felonies. It is expected that this will increase the number of



people seeking services. While it is clear the legislative intent is to intervene with mental health services there remains the issue of limited resources.

Services to some children in Fresno County are provided through the High Intensity Outpatient program. This program is designed for children ages 10-17 who have been admitted for acute care. Services include individual therapy, rehabilitation therapy, collateral sessions with caregiver, and home-based services. They can also be referred to medical services and intensive case management.

The Fresno Mission is currently developing the City Center, a multi-pronged service center located at Dakota and Blackstone. Formerly the Rescue Mission, it hopes to better meet the increased needs of families as well as individuals. Various nonprofit agencies such as the Food Bank are housed under one roof to address a variety of barriers to success. The City Center campus provides for outdoor activities, coffee house, charter school and transitional housing where clients can stay for six to eight months while they transition to more permanent housing. This is truly an impressive endeavor.

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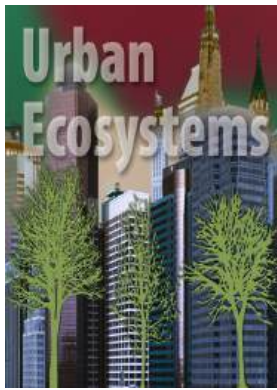
## Water News

by Diane Merrill



The voters of California approved Proposition 4, a 10 billion climate protection bond measure to finance water, clean energy and other environmental projects aimed at mitigating some impacts of climate change on communities and ecosystems.

Prop 4 includes \$3.8 billion for water projects, including those for safe drinking water, water recycling projects, groundwater storage and flood control. Wildfire protection projects would receive \$1.5 billion and \$1.2 billion would be used to protect coastal areas from sea level rise.



*The following is from the League of Women Voters of California's recommendation in support of Proposition 4.*

“Prop 4 is vital for mitigating the escalating costs of climate change and safeguarding our state's future. This bond will provide essential funding for projects that improve water quality and supply, protect against wildfires, and enhance the resilience of our natural ecosystems.

“It will also allocate at least 40% of its funding to low-income communities which are vulnerable to a disproportionately heightened risk or increased sensitivity to impacts of climate change and lack adequate resources to cope with, adapt to, or recover from such impacts.

“The economic toll of climate change is immense, with billions spent on disaster response, health impacts, and infrastructure repair. We have an urgent need for proactive measures to combat increased wildfire risks, sea-level rise, and severe droughts.

“By funding critical projects, Prop 4 will enhance resilience, protect communities, and ensure California continues to lead in environmental stewardship and innovation. This investment is essential for a sustainable and prosperous future.”

## Voter Services

by Sue Goldman



Thanks to all the volunteers for their hard work during the election season. The League hosted a brunch to express our appreciation for all the hours they put in. We had volunteers in the following areas:

Voter Registration: 3 people  
Why Vote presentations: 34 people  
Phone bank: 27 people  
Ballot opening: 50 people  
Vote 411: 7 people

A number of people participated in more than one activity. The phone bank was extremely busy this election cycle with volunteers putting in 688 hours. The volunteers opening ballots at the warehouse put in 700 hours. These activities provide not only a civic service but also earn money for the League under contract with the County Elections Department.



Robin Chiero headed support for Vote 411, a website which provided impartial candidate information without charge. Despite repeated phone calls and emails to candidates encouraging them to

use this free service, only 18% of local candidates uploaded their information to the Vote 411 site.

The committee will meet to debrief all the activities and determine ways to do things differently for the next election. This will be really important in terms of engaging in voter outreach.



# Health Care

by Richard Bertken, M.D.

Recently I was vaccinated against flu and covid at a local pharmacy. Flu went into my left shoulder and covid into the right. Three days later I developed a very painful conjunctivitis in my left eye that soon required a visit to my eye doctor. I was given corticosteroid with antibiotic eyedrops to use every six hours. The pain and impaired vision gradually resolved over an unsettling week.

Conjunctivitis is a well-known but uncommon adverse effect of vaccinations in general, but definitely more common for covid vaccinations. Unilateral conjunctivitis is rare. It is proven to happen, but how can it happen? No one knows, although a case in Japan was investigated by sophisticated DNA analysis that provided no explanation for the asymmetry. The idea that the immunizing agent might have traveled from the left shoulder directly into the left eye is funny in a Rube Goldberg sort of way.

This episode reactivated my concerns about the anti-vax sentiment in the US and around the developed world. What is now politely called “vaccine hesitancy” (VH for this article) is expressed by at least 12% of the populations of all advanced democracies. Political insiders have described VH it as a rapidly of VH associations since the covid pandemic. The prime driving force is reaction against mandatory immunization programs at all levels of government. “Freedom” and “liberty” are frequently found in the names of the numerous VH organizations around the globe. VH dates back to first effort at com-



pulsory vaccination. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century *variolation* arrived in Europe from Asia as a preventive procedure against smallpox infection. It was achieved by introducing skin lesion tissue from smallpox patients into the skin of the person to be protected.

Over the ensuing century, in spite of the risk of passing on other infectious diseases besides smallpox itself, variolation (synonymous with inoculation) proved so useful that the British government mandated childhood inoculations in 1753. In 1766 the first Anti-Compulsory Vaccine League emerged in London.

Organized VH has endured and spread throughout the world ever since despite the numerous vaccine successes: the eradication of smallpox and near eradication of about a dozen other formerly serious infectious diseases, as well as diseases of valuable animal herds.

I see two major battlegrounds where conflicts between vaccine advocates and detractors are playing out. One is schools, where vaccinations of students in school districts and colleges are mandatory. VH associations lobby state and local governments to allow expansion of exemptions to the vaccine mandates, with some recent success.

The other is social media, where horrible health outcomes are portrayed as caused by vaccinations without clear reasoning for that conclusion. These stories invariably receive overwhelming on-line validation and gen-

erate an exponential growth of similar stories.

My vaccination reaction moved me to consider ways to advance the idea that immunization against communicable diseases is not just protecting ourselves but also protecting our society. It is a key element of active citizenship.

In return for accepting the small risks of vaccination, each of us participates in a shared community effort aimed to prevent deaths, long-term disability and its associated healthcare expenses, and the social and economic costs of disease outbreaks.

Public relations campaigns in service of our societal goals are not new and should be revisited. For example, a lovable cartoon giraffe wearing a white coat intones, “only YOU can



prevent disease outbreaks.”

breaks.” Alternatively, “don’t die trying to avoid your covid shot.” An example from England: “it’s your job to get your job.”

Another useful venue is school civic engagement classes, where the role of immunizations in fostering healthier citizens and economies can provide young people with tools to judge for themselves the societal value of public health activities. Inevitably some VH personalities will label these as indoctrinations, but the CDC and other public health agencies have been standing on the sidelines far too long.

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# Student Unit activities underway at Fresno State



**Mia Zamora**

J

Mia Zamora is the president of the LWV Student Unit. Currently a junior at Fresno State, she is a recipient of the Smittcamp Family Honors College Scholarship. Smittcamp is Fresno State's honors college which accepts a cohort of 50 students per year. Her major is Political Science, with a minor in English Literature. Mia hopes to become a lawyer.

As president of the Student Unit, her goal has been to boost engagement. Young adults notoriously do not vote and have limited interaction with their local municipalities. Mia hopes to bridge the gap between college students and local issues with the objective of making civic engagement more approachable and accessible.

## JOAN LIPTON



Joan Lipton, a Life member who first joined League in 1973, passed away on November 5 at the age of 94. Joan served as our president from 1995 to 1997, years when juvenile justice and campaign finance reform were at the forefront of League's attention. She attended the National Convention in Chicago and enjoyed matching people with responsibilities. She was married to Werner Lipton, who is honored annually by the Lipton Award. It was established posthumously to recognize a person with outstanding advocacy and volunteerism.



**Naomi Bick**

Board member Naomi Bick is faculty advisor for our League's Student Unit at Fresno State. To our knowledge, it is the only officially affiliated Student Unit in the country. Dr Bick is an Assistant Professor in the Political Science Department

The Student LWV Unit has partnered with President Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval at his president's booth as part of a College of Social Science GOTV initiative. The GOTV initiative involved League students working to encourage voter registration and voting by talking with students as they walked by student tables and booths. League Students handed them QR codes and stickers and talked with them about voting.

The Unit has also collaborated with Student Housing, Greek Life, and the Fresno State Women's Association on campus.

Members helped the Fresno campus compete with other CSUs to gain the most voter registrations, an uphill battle since there are so many commuters on the Fresno campus who were already registered.

They have also met as a group to talk about goals, plans, and do some bonding activities such as crafting and creating club branding and ideas.

The Unit hopes to co-host an event about famous women leaders with the Fresno State Women's Association and also work with the Political Science Department on some post-election events.

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## Climate Action

by Terri Figgs



The Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Community Strategy continues on track to be completed in 2026.

A new consideration for this plan is the incorporation of a Climate Resiliency Plan. This addition stems from the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law completed in 2023. The Law provides \$50 billion in funding to advance climate resilience strategies in transportation planning to States and Counties around the country.



Fresno Council of Governments (COG) has an online survey to collect public input on improvements that would mitigate the impacts of climate hazards like heat, flooding, wildfire, and landslides on the transportation system. COG will then develop a list of candidate projects in the Climate Resilience Plan that will feed into the 2026 Regional Transportation Plan.

Survey results will inform risk assessment and help to identify community concerns related to these hazards. To participate in this survey please go to <https://publicinput.com/crsurvey> if you type in the *https* address above in whatever search engine you use for internet access and press enter, then you will be taken to the correct survey on COG's website.

Please take the survey as soon as possible as it will close soon to allow for the results to be tabulated.

Measure C, the transportation sales tax, is critical to help fund the projects contained in the Regional Transportation Plan. If Measure C is to be extended, direct community participation is essential. Participation in this survey is one way to do that.

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## Housing

by Marianne Kast



In many US cities, efforts are underway to turn dead or dying retail malls into neighborhoods.

For real estate, location is paramount, and retail malls are often located in desirable areas and along established transportation corridors. States like California incentivize the placement of housing where quality public transportation already exists, so adding high-rise residential buildings in the parking lots of dying malls or tearing down mall sites and redeveloping them into multi-use communities including housing, is a growing trend.

And, since leases for retail businesses usually lock in rents for years at a time, while residential rents are often managed in one-year increments, developers can quickly realize increases in market values when their projects include housing.

Renters and home buyers are attracted to walkable neighborhoods which include retail services. Having your favorite stores next door to your home is a powerful antidote to the e-commerce boon. Incorporating open space, community gathering areas, entertainment areas, and office spaces on the reimagined mall sites gives residents even more reason to spend time (and money) on the property.

But redeveloping mall sites can be particularly difficult. Often, anchor tenants own their building and the property underneath it, and may have a say in the use of the property. Redeveloping a mall site can involve negotiating with many separate property owners. For stores that remain, adjusting retail hours to accommodate shoppers that are always on the property can be challenging.

And finally, converting massive swaths of asphalt and a windowless mall structure to a neighborhood with open space, entertainment for adults and children, and the warmth of home requires thoughtful creativity.

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## Lawsuit slowed by problems with administrative record

by Radley Reep

Nine months ago the Fresno County Board of Supervisors approved a comprehensive revision of the County's General Plan. Concluding that the approval violated the California Environmental Quality Act and various state laws, the League, together with the Central Valley Partnership and Sierra Club (Petitioners), filed suit in superior court.

The suit has progressed little since then. The holdup is certification of the administrative record for the case, which is the collection of County-prepared documents that attorneys will use to support their arguments and the courts will use to render a decision.

The County prepared a 33,045-page administrative record for this suit in September but there was an unexpected problem. Review by Petitioners showed the record to be significantly incomplete, and in October Petitioners filed with the court an *Objection to the County's Certification of an Incomplete Administrative Record*.

The County readily agreed that the record was incomplete, and in mid-November, the County sent Petitioners a draft list of documents to be added to the record. But again, Petitioners found the record to be deficient, and so in late November, Petitioners sent the County a list of 94 documents that Petitioners knew were still missing from the record.

On a related matter, the administrative record must include, by law, a transcript of any proceeding at which the decision-making body [Board of Supervisors] heard testimony about the project. Since The County initiated the revision of the General Plan in 2005, it has held more than 80 hearings and public meetings on its revision. The record prepared by the County only includes transcripts of six of those hearings and meetings.

Petitioners are trying to work with the County to agree on an administrative record that is acceptable to all parties. Until an agreement is reached or the court resolves the matter, the case will continue to inch along.



Please bring toys, clothes, books for Stone Soup preschoolers at our Holiday Party on December 8

## Education

(continued from page 3) Each is evaluated by the district on the basis of its academic success, its financial viability, and its faith to its mission and program as stated in its charter petition. Hearings for University High resulted in the approval of a new five-year authorization. There will be decisions relative to the two Aspen elementary schools before the end of the calendar year. Sierra will have a hearing in the spring.

The staff proposal for the expenditure of the district's Arts, Music, and Instructional Support Services Discretionary Block Grant includes a number of services for special education and high-need students. The plan includes reading specialists, mental health supports, and alternatives to suspension among multiple other programs for spending the \$38 million grant.

The board took issue with only one of the proposals, to fund washers and dryers for student/family use at all the school sites. Subsidizing laundromat use was proposed as an alternative.





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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.

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