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THE

FRESNO VOTER

Our 86th Year



Join us for our Holiday
Party on
Sunday, December 7
from 2 to 5 p.m.
at the home of
Angela and Mike Presto
1526 West San Jose
Fresno.
See Wish List for
Stone Soup on page 5

Happy Holidays

December 26



December 14—21



December 25



Co-President's Message

by Robin Chiero



November 2025 Board Minutes

The League of Women Voters has had a national position on immigration since 2008. Each League position, whether national, state or local, is adopted only after study and consensus, and once adopted provides the basis for action and advocacy related to that position.

Briefly, the League's position on immigration is to "promote the reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business and employment needs of the United States; be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises; and provide for student visas; ensure fair treatment under the law for all persons. In transition to a reformed system, support provisions for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status."

At the Fresno League's October Meeting our speaker was Professor Linda Barreto, professor of law and Managing Director of the New American Legal Clinic at San Joaquin College of Law. Professor Barreto is also a California State Bar Certified Specialist in Immigration and Nationality Law.

The turnout at the meeting indicated that immigration is an issue of importance to League members. Professor Barreto provided us with a great deal of interesting and useful information on this complicated system. She urged us to become familiar with immigration system terminology: Refugees and asylum seekers, Lawful Permanent Residents, and Expedited Removal, just to name a few.

She also discussed some of the difficulties and challenges faced by those attempting to attain legal status in the United States. She distributed Red Cards, provided by the Immigrant Resource Center and which list the Constitutional rights and protections available to all individuals in the U.S. regardless of immigration status. She encouraged us to distribute them to any one we know, or who might know someone needing the information.

You can find more information on the League's position on immigration and some of the advocacy efforts at <https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues>. We look forward to seeing you at our monthly meetings - guests are welcome as well.

Robin

The Voter is a monthly publication of the LWV Fresno

Mailing address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710

Volume 66 No. 11 Editor: Francine M. Farber

Board news: Angela Presto has been appointed by the board as its newest member. She will serve as acting secretary in Faye's absence. The January meeting has been changed from 1/22 to 1/29.

Students: Dues for 9 students have been contributed by members and will be sent to the National. Including our students, membership is now at 178, the highest in a number of years.

Party: The holiday party will be held on December 7 at the Presto's home with food provided by board members. Guests will be asked to bring gifts for children at Stone Soup. A list of what is requested will be in the Voter

Measure C: While the committee is working well there is disagreement with the Board of Supervisors on expenditures. The committee would like to fund disadvantaged communities and coordinate public transit.

Mural: There is interest from Fresno Unified, possibly on an M Street wall.

Budget: \$30 to \$40 per regular membership meeting is allocated planned to pay for refreshments. The annual meeting and Women's Equality Day will have separate budgets.



LWVF IS A 501 C3 non-profit organization and all donations, including dues, are tax deductible. Please make out checks to LWVF and send to Treasurer, LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno 93710.

Climate Action

by Andrea Farber De Zubiria



We need to fix our forests. Cal Fire and other fire experts say that our worsened forest fires are a combination of global warming and deferred forest management.

American forests currently offset 12% of our annual climate pollution, with the potential to do even more. But in the U.S., the annual area burned by wildfires has more than doubled over the past 30 years. In California alone, the acreage burned by wildfires every year has more than tripled over the past 40 years.

In addition to the lost carbon storage, wildfires cost lives, create harmful smoke pollution, and make it more expensive to insure and rebuild our communities. The Fix Our Forests Act includes provisions to increase resiliency to catastrophic wildfires, restore forest health, and build fire-safety defenses for communities in high-risk areas.

All five Central Valley members of Congress—3 Republicans and 2 Democrats—voted for it in January 2025. In late October the Senate version passed through the Senate Agriculture committee with bipartisan support. It had not yet been approved in the full Senate last month.

Fix Our Forests simplifies and expedites the most critical forest management projects while maintaining strong environmental standards (e.g. eliminating redundant agency consultations). Supporters say it reduces delays to critical actions due to litigation over insignificant impacts and fosters community input. It is intended to boost the pace and scale of forest management by providing agencies with emergency tools.



Some major environmental groups are supporting The Fix Our Forest Act like The Audubon Society and The Nature Conservancy as well as the Evangelical Environmental Network, Citizens' Climate Lobby and American Forests. Not all environmental groups agree, notably The Sierra Club, due to distrust that it could lead to logging on federal lands, or a weakening of the environmental protection act. Supporting organizations say the bill language does not allow this and the status quo is a dangerous path. The League of Women Voters is not taking a position on this legislation at this time.

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Housing

by Marianne Kast



A diverse coalition of Fresno community groups challenged the city last month to reconsider proposed actions to expand the city limits in the Southeast Development Area (SEDA), which would convert 9,000 acres of farmland into 43,000 homes plus commercial development over the next 50 years.

Controversy over the plan focuses on estimated costs of \$3 billion over and above expected developers' fees to extend city infrastructure to the new area as well as disputed population estimates for Fresno over the next 50 years. Opponents of SEDA at the Fresno Planning Commission hearing described these and many other reasons for the plan to be scuttled, yet the Commission recommended the plan to the City Council on a 4-3 vote.

SEDA opponents have threatened to use a "nuclear option" if the City Council, despite opposition, approves this plan. What are those options? One possibility is a referendum challenging the City Council's approval of SEDA if that occurs. Opponents would have 30 days after indicating their intention, to gather about 28,000 signatures (10% of city registered voters as of October, 2025) challenging the Council's action. Once the signatures are verified, the Council could act on its own to repeal its decision or the issue would be put to a city-wide vote.

A more politically contentious process is to set urban growth boundaries (UGBs) for Fresno. UGBs are geographical limits for sprawl development around a city, county or region. Development is allowed inside the urban growth boundary; agricultural land is protected outside the UGB. They are designed to prevent real estate development in previously undeveloped areas. Considering the leanings of Fresno's current city council and mayor, an urban growth boundary would likely need to be established by citizen initiative.

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Voter Services

by Sue Goldman



During the past election the League had quite a few volunteers. For the phone bank, 35 people volunteered. In total they put in almost 535 hours. Thirty people volunteered for the ballot opening. They put in 169.5 hours. Being that this was a special election, all these volunteer hours were an unexpected infusion of money for the League.

As of November 15, 42.15% of registered voters actually voted. That number will go up as they count the same day registration voters and cure the remaining ballots (e.g. where signatures don't match) by the end of November.

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Donations

Generous donations were received this month from

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



Of particular interest to the Board this month was California's new Transitional Rent program that provides up to six months of rental assistance to qualifying Medi-Cal members at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Administered through Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans (MCP), the program aims to connect members to long-term housing and healthcare services. The program is being rolled out in stages with mandatory implementation for all MCPs beginning January 1, 2026. Eligible individuals must be Medi-Cal members and meet specific criteria, which include having a serious mental illness or certain chronic physical health conditions.

Community supports will include the Department, but the MCPs are responsible for administering the program, including determining eligibility and connecting members with services. The Department will have agreements with Anthem, Cal Viva HealthNet, and Kaiser to establish the roles of the MCPs and of the County.

Deputy Department Director Emma Rasmussen provided an overview of the Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program for youth in Fresno County. This program provides short-term, intensive, specialty mental health services for youth and non-minor dependents who require a higher level of behavioral and mental health support. These services are provided on-site, in a residential environment. The program is designed to be short-term and focused on stabilization, treatment and transition planning for return to a family-based or less restrictive setting. Youth are referred by Child Welfare and Probation systems. Generally these are referred to as Board and Care homes.

A provider spoke and attributed a serious financial strain on providers to a steady decline in the number of referrals from Department conservators and the Public Guardian. He asked that the Department meet with providers on a regular basis to address expectations and concerns on both sides. The Board hopes to hear more about this situation, which is a valuable service to our behavioral health community.

Due to construction at the Health and Wellness Center, the Behavioral Health Board will meet at the West Fresno Regional Center at 142 East California Avenue in December.

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Health Care

by Richard Bertken M.D.



The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) passed a deeply divided Congress on the 4th of July (!) of this year, threatening our healthcare safety net for the long term. Managers of our healthcare system recoiled at the prospect of degradation of hospitals and clinics nationwide. Did this emerge from “a concept of a plan” or “something better” than Obamacare?

OBBBA significantly reduced federal funding for both Medicaid and the Insurance Marketplace. Government spending on both programs would be reduced primarily by increased frequency and extent of verification and eligibility checks, along with work and residency requirements. Over the next decade, eleven million people would lose their health insurance, with the intent of reducing healthcare spending by a trillion dollars.

By contrast, four trillion dollars over ten years is the cost of OBBBA’s sustaining various tax breaks benefitting corporations and wealthy individuals enacted in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017.

The Marketplace is the program for people or households with lesser degrees of poverty than those qualifying for Medicaid. Twenty million people buy health insurance from competing Marketplace companies using federal subsidies that were augmented during the Covid crisis but which OBBBA will cut to previous levels.

Removing the Biden era subsidy enhancement is a minute fragment of the deconstruction of Obamacare, but the Democratic congress minority seized on this issue to challenge the healthcare provisions of the OBBBA. This forced the longest-ever government shutdown, resolved only by the tiny concession by

the Republicans to hold a vote on the subsidy cuts. The Democratic strategy was to let the 20 million Americans with Marketplace insurance know that Republicans wanted to increase their health insurance costs by \$700 a year, a less than earnest overall defense of Obamacare.

Medicaid currently insures over 74 million Americans. Its annual expenditure exceeds 950 billion dollars, a vital income stream for the nation’s healthcare portfolio. The OBBBA plans to phase in colossal 60% cuts in government spending over the next ten years in an exponential fashion, most occurring seven years from now. These savings would be primarily achieved by reducing the number of patients eligible for services, but also by reductions of available services. On that path, already depleted women’s health programs and rural clinics and hospitals (like so many in our Central Valley) would wither early on.

The relentless efforts of many Congressmembers to defund the Medicaid expansion and the Marketplace have not been balanced by any effort to reduce the price of our overall healthcare system. Per person it is by far the highest in the world. Our key health outcome measures are among the worst in reports from the advanced democracies. But instead of attending to our extraordinary administrative and drug costs, they have proposed reduced services to those least likely to complain.

After WWII, unlike most other advanced democracies that set up universal healthcare systems, our system evolved as a set of competing clinics, hospitals, clinics, and insurance businesses. That set the pattern for comparatively open expansion and competition that we see

today, supplemented by Medicare and Medicaid. Market forces have not succeeded in controlling costs. The US spends 5 trillion dollars annually on healthcare, \$15,000 per person, compared to the average in the advanced OECD countries of \$6,000 per year.

There are many pathways to controlling costs and prices here that are well-tested in our peer countries. However, our long history of industry-driven healthcare growth has spawned the most powerful political lobby in Washington. Government-imposed constraints on the industry’s priorities advance slowly, if at all.

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STONE SOUP WISH LIST

There are 150 children onsite daily. These are the wish items from their teachers. Most students are birth to 5 years. There are 26 youth from first to eighth grade.

◆ Gift Cards

- ⇒ Fresno Chaffee Zoo
- ⇒ John's Incredible Pizza
- ⇒ Blackbeard's Family Entertainment Center
- ⇒ No Surrender laser tag & adventure park
- ⇒ Sky Zone (Clovis)
- ⇒ FoodMaxx, Target, Amazon, or Walmart (any amount)
- ⇒ Gasoline (any brand)

◆ Blankets (Quantity: 100)

◆ Sensory / Fidget items / Toys

◆ Books (for 0-5 years)

◆ Socks & Underwear Kid sizes: S, M, L)

◆ Crocs (for 0-5 years & first to eighth grade



Education

by Kay Bertken



Fresno Unified trustees have been restricting their meetings to necessary approvals and content focused on their student achievement goals. These goals, interim goals and guardrails were established through their work with the Council of Great City Schools to implement a process of Student-Centered Governance. Part of that work has been to limit school board meetings to a few items and remove a lot of what had been ceremonial and/or other district activity—recognitions, campus activity reports, student presentations, and report-outs from various operational divisions.

The most recent meetings have concerned the superintendent's evaluation, scheduled for April. The new approach will consider whether the superintendent has met interim goals and adhered to guardrails. The superintendent will get a grade based on points: one point for meeting a goal, a half point for on track to meeting the goal, and zero for not meeting the goal.

On a parallel track, the area College and Career Network (C2C), involving players across the county's child service and education systems, has been meeting to discuss its goals toward reading by third grade and getting 47,000 more area students on track to economic mobility and success by 2030. They are in the process of evaluating how they are doing by identifying milestones and finding out where more support might be needed. Their most recent meeting focused on preschool interventions.

The Child Find law in California obligates every local education agency to identify and evaluate students with known or suspected disabilities to determine the need for special services. It is recommended that children get developmental screenings three times before the age of three. First Five reported its inability to know how many of the county's children receive those screenings and the need to get the area's pediatricians to participate.

Exceptional Parents Unlimited and The Early Stars program of the County Office of Education, a program that rates preschool providers, reported on their efforts to provide screening and inform parents about available services. The future of MediCal funding for services and challenges accessing available benefits, an issue especially affecting immigrant families, was reported.

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Student League active again on campus

by Mia Zamora

After a pause due to COVID-19, the Student League of LWVF is happy to be back on campus, promoting student civic engagement. Thirteen students work with Mia Zamora, president, Sophia Rubalcaba vice president, and Andrea Parra, treasurer. We are guided by Dr. Naomi Bick, Assistant Political Science Professor and Director of the Master in Public Administration Program at Fresno State.



Mia Zamora

We have been heavily involved in educating the Fresno State student body on Proposition 50. Policy, in general, often overwhelms many college students. Our goal is to empower them with the confidence to engage in politics through education. We successfully hosted a booth educating students about Proposition 50 and its implications. By speaking with students and addressing their questions about the recent special election, we were able to equip them with the necessary tools to cast their votes.

With voter empowerment and civic engagement at the forefront of our goals, the group has helped organize many events on our campus, most notably working to increase voter registration. In collaboration with Fresno State administration, the League assisted with the school's involvement in the statewide California Ballot Bowl competition. We have focused on local policy issues within the Fresno community. With the leadership and support of the LWVF students have been awarded the opportunity to engage with elected officials including Assemblymember Joaquin Arambula, Senator Melissa Hurtado, and Assemblymember Esmeralda Soria.

As former students themselves, these members understand what it is like to feel distanced from local policy. Through the League of Women Voters, the goal is to engage students with local political leaders and advocates so that they develop a greater connection to the Fresno community.

In the future we plan to continue working on education, advocacy and voter registration.



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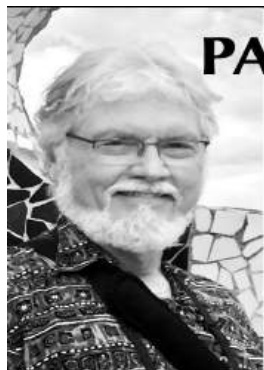
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MISSION: The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of interested individuals and influences public policy through voter education and advocacy on issues. The League does 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 - \$75 is the recommended amount. However you can choose an amount, with \$20 being the least you can pay. Renew online at <https://portal.lwv.org/>

Please make your check payable to the US League of Women Voters, Fresno, and send to our local office at LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710. with registration form below

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