

Phone: 559-226—VOTE

Info.lwvfresno@gmail.com

Web site:
www.lwvfresno.org



Tuesday, February 4
National Judiciary Study
4 p.m. Zoom

Monday, February 10
Regular Board Meeting
4 p.m. Stone Soup

Saturday, February 22
Program Planning
9:30 a.m. Stone Soup
See pages 2 and 4

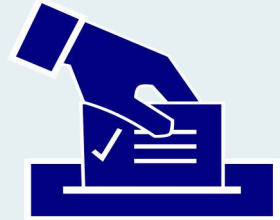
Monday, March 10
Regular Board Meeting
4p.m. Stone Soup



THE

FRESNO

VOTER



Our 84th Year



Tuesday, February 4, 4 p.m.

**Join us in participating in the
Federal Judiciary Study**

**Check with your League Update for details
and link on Microsoft Teams**

Saturday, February 22, 9:30 a.m.

**LWV Fresno Program Planning Meeting
In person at Stone Soup**

Continental Breakfast will be served

More information on pages 2 and 4

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



January 2025

Once a year the League holds a Program Planning meeting of its members to discuss and decide on its priorities for education and advocacy for the year. This year we will be sending our recommendations to the State League to let it know what we think are the two or three major issues it should concentrate on. In addition, we will consider our own several local priorities.

To introduce the discussion, we will share with you what the State League was up to last year as well as what our local state legislators have been telling us in our interviews with them. Once we have decided what advice we will send to the state league, we will turn to the local scene.

The board is already committed to two major projects for the next year that will involve educating ourselves and the community, but we want to know from our members what else you would like to educate and advocate for.

We have been and will continue to be involved in the creation and passage of a new Measure C transportation tax. Our second ongoing focus is our lawsuit against the county. The former has us engaged in a grassroots effort to gather information about local transit needs. The lawsuit, in partnership with the local Sierra Club and the Central Valley Partnership, concerns what we claim to be inadequate environmental considerations in the county's renewed General Plan.

What else do you want to know about and be involved with? There are many policy issues that vie for our attention in any given year, but this year seems particularly burdened. Please come to the meeting on February 22 and help us decide where to best focus our attention. See our handbook for local positions and the links to the state and national positions which also apply to us.

Are we strategically ready to engage in this issue? Do we have the people power or other resources to engage? Are you willing to help? Read more about our interests on page 4.

Kay

The Voter is a monthly publication of the LWV Fresno

Mailing address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710

Volume 66 No. 2 Editor: Francine M. Farber

Legislative interviews: Interviews are scheduled with state senator Joaquin Arambula, including three students, and with assembly member Alexandra Macedo from Tulare.

Program Planning: The interim chief of police is a possibility to speak at a members meeting.

Bylaws: Our suggested by-law changes have been approved by the state league. Our Board will need to approve them in February and then approved by the membership at the Annual Meeting.

Budget Committee: Robin Chiero will chair with Faye Nennig and Maureen Hayes as members, The Treasurer cannot be the chair.

Law suit: Our suit against the County has been combined with that of the City of Fresno. A joint management conference will be held in February. The project is inconsistent with land use policies in the County General Plan as well as with the San Joaquin Parkway Conservancy Master Plan.

Climate Action: The committee would like to send out a questionnaire on whether people are doing organic food waste recycling.

Judiciary study: A study guide and questions will be distributed in February with a consensus meeting in March. April 14 is the deadline for a report to the LWVUS.

Rural Transportation: The Rural Transportation Authority will hold on to our donated funds until February when the contract expires. We still need to decide on a use for the balance of the funds, roughly \$9,000.

(continued on page 6)

LWVF IS A 501 C3 non-profit organization and all donations, including dues, are tax deductible. Donations are always accepted for the RBG Scholarship Fund at San Joaquin College of Law, the League's general fund, and any other purpose. Your estate planning is encouraged to consider LWVF. Please make out checks to LWVF and send to Treasurer, LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno 93710.

Education

by Kay Bertken



There have been few substantive new issues arising in the Fresno Unified school board meetings, so this month I am focusing on the more volatile national scene where the United States Department of Education has made news as a candidate for possible elimination by the new Trump administration.

A federal interest in education is much older than the existing cabinet department. A federal education office was first established in 1867 to collect information on schools and teaching to help the states establish effective school systems. In the 1890's it became responsible for the system of land grant colleges and in 1944 for administration of the GI Bill.

The current incarnation of a separate cabinet Department of Education—separate from the former Department of Health, Education, and Welfare—happened in 1980. The Education Department is the smallest of the federal departments (measured by number of employees—4,100) and accounts for just about 4% of the federal budget, or \$268 billion. The funding and operation of institutions of education in the United States is overwhelmingly a state, local, and/or private responsibility.

Most of the Education Department's funding goes to student aid through post-secondary Pell grants. Nearly all of its elementary and secondary expenditures are Title I expenditures to states and local agencies to augment education expenditures for students from low-income families, to funds for special education, and to school improvement grants.

The Department houses the National Center for Education Statistics. It also administers a number of smaller programs including vocational rehabilitation grants to the states to provide supports to disabled adults; supports for career and technical education offered in high schools, community and technical colleges; and adult education GED and literacy programs.

The Head Start preschool program is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services. The Department of Veteran's Affairs administers various education and job training programs for veterans.

kaybertken752@gmail.com

Behavioral Health

by Sherri Gibson

With increased focus on homelessness the governor's budget proposes a new California Housing and Homelessness Agency. Currently there is no single state entity managing housing and homelessness. Fresno County has designated a position to address homelessness. There will be stronger state accountability policies to monitor funding and local efforts, including in-depth local reviews.



Fresno County Department of Behavioral Health has undergone major reorganization in an attempt to better align similar functions and management authority and responsibility. Their medical director position is now filled by a physician who is hired in partnership with UCSF psychiatric department.

One new piece of legislation and implementation is the CARE Act (Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment). The intent is to provide mental health and substance use disorder services to people who are on the schizophrenia spectrum (psychotic disorders) and are severely impaired. The CARE Act's goal is to help people avoid incarceration and psychiatric hospitalization by providing them with community-based treatment.

Several entities may petition civil court to determine eligibility. If eligible, the court can order services and services will be offered for twelve months with possible renewal up to twenty-four months. Nothing in the CARE act forces a person to accept services.

sgibson@russellsmithinc.com

League interests :

What we have been emphasizing this year

by Francine Farber, Editor

When thinking about ideas in which you might be interested for Program Planning study, it can be helpful to know some of the paths our Directors have been following this year. Other board members and league members write about their interests from time to time as well.

In Behavioral Health, Carolyn Evans

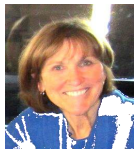
(left) and Sherri Gibson have been attending Behavioral Health Board meetings every month and reporting on new legislation as well as the BHB members' visits to programs run by the Behavioral Health Department and/or their contractual providers. Carolyn is a long-time member of the BHB and past president, while Sherri is a newcomer to attending meetings and has a background in this area.



Climate Action is an important interest for many members led by chair Nancy Richardson and written about in the monthly Voter by members taking turns with that responsibility, including Carol Ann Meme and Andrea de Zubiria, the latter also chair of the regional Climate Committee.



Nancy, Carol Ann, Andrea



In Education, Kay Bertken has been attending Fresno Board of Education meetings faithfully for close to two decades and reporting on member's actions, arguments and adventures every month even while serving as LWVF co-president. She has also led committee studies on charter schools and other education specialties.

Land Use and its effect on so many other interests is one of many areas in which Radley Reep has taken a leadership role, devoting countless hours to his investigation of thousands of pages of documents. He is es-



pecially interested in the actions of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors.

In Housing, Marianne of the LWV, has been and problems of the



Kast, a past president following the needs region including state legislation to enable construction and provide more and affordable housing throughout California.



VP for Voter Services Sue Goldman works with an active committee of members and the public to register voters and to actually get out the vote. She and member Janice Maroot then work during elections to get a large cadre of people to review mail-in ballots and answer telephone questions during the days leading up to the election and beyond.

Transportation is under scrutiny through Measure C, which proposes to extend a tax to provide necessary improvements throughout the city of Fresno and in rural areas of Fresno County.



Dr. Richard Bertken shines a spotlight on **Healthcare**, both national and statewide, to reveal problems and possible solutions to medical issues of concern to the general public.

farberfrannola@gmail.com

DONATIONS

This month generation donations were received from

Dr Richard and Kay Bertken

Alex Pollack

Kathy Webb

Voter Services

by Sue Goldman



The voter services committee is continuing to prepare activities for a primary election in March, 2026. We are focusing on the following areas:

High Schools: We are looking at the possibility of training students to engage in voter education and voter registration.



Why Vote presentations: We will be targeting ready made audiences rather than trying to bring people in for presentations. The committee will be contacting various organizations to see if they can provide translation services for voter services information.

Mis-and disinformation: We covered this topic briefly in our *Why Vote* PowerPoint presentation. However, since this has become a major issue in this country, we feel it deserves a separate, more in-depth PowerPoint presentation. Other Leagues will be contacted to see if they have already developed presentations on this topic.

Public Services Announcements: I will be meeting with CMAC to determine what assistance they can provide in this area. We will also be contacting the Fresno State media department in this regard. Radio and TV stations will be contacted to determine the process for airing the PSA's as well as determining effectiveness of previous ones that other organizations have done.

Fresno State Service Learning Fair: This fair focuses on presenting students with volunteer opportunities. We will be soliciting volunteers for the following areas: marketing; training of League members on social media platforms; translation; and developing social media

wldtr1951@gmail.com

Century-long bedrock mining asked for San Joaquin Parkway

by Radley Reep

CEMEX, a Mexican multinational building materials corporation headquartered near Monterrey, Mexico, has filed an application with the County of Fresno to modify an existing use permit to allow hard-rock mining within the boundaries of the San Joaquin River Parkway.

If approved, the 100-year permit would not only authorize the continuing excavation of sand and gravel down to bedrock — the historical manner of mining the river bottom — but would also license the blasting and crushing of bedrock and the creation of a quarry adjacent to Lost Lake Park one half mile across and 600 feet deep.

The county has prepared a draft environmental impact report (DEIR), which is available for public review and comment through March 10. To review the report, enter the keyword phrase *Fresno County Public Works and Planning* into your web browser. Once you have found the 'Public Works and Planning' webpage, go to *Planning and Land Use*. Then search for *Environmental Impact Reports* and select *Cemex Rockfield Expansion*.



The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) does not obligate the County to hold public information meetings to enable county residents to discuss the nature of the project with County staff or the project applicant. As of now, the County does not intend to conduct any public information meetings.

The only public meeting will be a Planning Commission hearing on the merits of the proposal, at which time the Commission will either approve or deny the application. At that hearing, which could take place as early as May, County residents will be given two to three minutes each to express their support or opposition. Unless appealed to the Board of Supervisors, the Commission's decision will be final.

radleyreep@netzero.com

Climate Action

by Carol Ann Meme



Although the devastating Southern California wildfires have intensely local effects, they are attributable, at least to some degree, to global climate changes caused by greenhouse gas emissions of major economies around the world.

We are not even close to meeting our climate goals of limiting global warming to 2°C (3.6°F) by century end or achieving net



-zero greenhouse gas emissions close to midcentury. Instead, we need to prepare for a more likely

outcome, which currently includes average warming in excess of 3°C (5.4°F) by century end. In the United States wildfire intensity will continue to rise alongside other impacts from droughts to heat waves to intense hurricanes.

The Santa Ana winds played a major role in this most recent firestorm. These winds occur when air from a region of high pressure over the dry, desert region of the southwestern U.S. flows westward towards the low pressure located off the California coast. These winds are common between September and May. However, this year they were the most intense they have ever been, often ranging close to 100 mph and flowing over an area that is much drier than usual due to lack of rainfall. The last time Los Angeles logged more than one-tenth of an inch of rain was in early May 2024.

What can homeowners and local governments do to prepare for the possibility of devastating wildfires that are now becoming urban fires instead of wilderness fires? Here are a few suggestions:

- ◆ Embers falling on roofs is a common way for homes to ignite. Roofs made from metal, tile or cement rather than wood shingles are less likely to ignite.



Highlights *(continued from page 2)*

Measure C: There are currently two tracks being developed for Measure C ballot language. . Neither track wants both to appear on the ballot as both would likely fail.

Cemex: The Board has decided to send a comment letter to the County regarding the Cemex petition to get a 100-year –long permit. The first 30 years would be to undertake “traditional” mining while the next 70 would be spent blasting bedrock. The resulting pit would be a half mile wide and 600 feet deep.

Mural: We are moving along on the mural. A positive meeting has taken place between the owners of the building on which the mural is proposed and the artist. A contract has been drafted and Atty. Slater is reviewing it.pro bono.

REMEMBER TWO DATES!

**FEBRUARY 4 - JUDICIARY STUDY
4 P.M. MICROSOFT TEAMS**

**FEBRUARY 22—PROGRAM PLANNING
9:30 A.M. IN PERSON**

- ◆ Siding made from stucco or fiber cement is less likely to burn than siding made from wood
- ◆ Vents allow embers to enter a home and start a fire. Standard covers, such as those that keep rodents out, are not sufficient. Vents need to be covered with metal mesh with holes no greater than one-eighth of an inch
- ◆ Upgrading single-pane windows to tempered glass double-pane windows makes windows less likely to shatter during a fire.
- ◆ Vegetation and flammable objects like wooden furniture or woodpiles should be at least five feet away from homes. You can lay gravel, cement or bricks in that 5-foot buffer zone.

◆ Until we can make a larger impact in managing climate change, we should prepare as best we can to survive its consequences.

memecarolann3@gmail.com



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Men and Women age 16 and above Making Democracy

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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