



Phone: 559-226-VOTE

Web site: LWVFresno.org

The *Fresno* **VOTER**



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
See page X

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



2019



We
Won !!!!!
See
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PLEASE NOTE: Due to holiday printing and mailing schedules, this is an all-electronic issue. The usual hard copies will resume next month.

President's Message



One of the most rewarding opportunities of 2018 was being able to work with Fresno State students on League projects. Students bring different skills and new ideas, and we benefit from their refreshing vision of the work with which we are familiar.

The student group that produced two videos about the League, one a shorter version of the other, was led by Craig Talbot, a senior majoring in Mass Communication and Journalism. He ably directed the work on our video and was assisted by a story editor, camera person, and production assistant. Just as we were in awe of the quality of their work, they were impressed with the work of the League. I know that each of these students will be advocates for voting and participation in civic life in the future. Here's the link to the long version of the film they produced for "Fresno State Serves," a program which highlights student community service activities and airs on CMAC.

<http://cmac.tv/show/7558/fresno-state-serves-league-of-women-voters/>

This fall we debuted a weekly email newsletter with the goal of encouraging all LWV Fresno members to attend public meetings and events related to the ongoing work of our League. We've had many opportunities to add recipients as we meet up with people in our community who are curious about the League.

Graciela "Gracie" Sierra Moreno stopped by our table at last August's CSUF Community Service Opportunities Fair. She proved to be a wonderful resource for us as well as for the LWVF Student Unit on campus. Gracie was instrumental in developing the format for our weekly newsletter, and was available weekly to be sure it got out as planned. I'm thrilled that she has agreed to continue working on the weekly newsletter next semester.

Finally, Mike Lawrence also stopped by our table at the CSUF Fair. A veteran with lots of life experience, Mike offered to be our cameraman for a series of 30-second "Why I'm involved with the League" videos. We are still in the editing process for these shorts

Video messaging and Internet newsletters are common for many organizations we belong to, but they are new for our League. I welcome your opinion on our forays into this new world!

Marianne

MEMBER NEWS

Please edit your roster



DR. FRANK POWELL

We deeply regret the passing on December 1 of Dr. Frank Powell, husband of Alice Powell and a League member since 1982. Frank was a psychologist, a Fresno State professor, veteran, Peace Corps leader and a community volunteer. He served as the chair of the board of the Educational Employees Credit Union. Only recently his family learned that he had received a Bronze Star during World War II. A memorial service will be held this month.

It's always a good time for a 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

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

Mailing address: 1345 Bulldog Lane Fresno, CA 93710

Volume 78, No. 1 Editor: Francine M. Farber

EXTRA

FRESNO LEAGUE AND OTHER APPELLANTS WIN CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT CASE ON FRIANT RANCH ENVIRONMENTAL LAWSUIT

The California Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling on Christmas Eve in favor of the public-interest appellants League of Women Voters of Fresno, Sierra Club, and Revive the San Joaquin. The developers of a 2,500 home project near Millerton Lake had originally received approval from the Fresno County Board of Supervisors almost 8 years ago but continuing litigation has impeded any start on the massive 942 acre community.

Underscoring the import of the Supreme Court's ruling, prominent environmental attorney Richard Drury of Lozeau Drury in Oakland stated "This is the most significant CEQA case in a decade." CEQA is the California Environmental Quality Act.

The unanimous opinion by Supreme Court Justice Ming Chin holds that EIRs (environmental impact reviews) must explain the nature and magnitude of a proposed project's significant air pollution on public health in a way that the public can understand.

The case has been under the supervision of attorney Sara Hedgpeth Harris, a long-time member of our League. **The developers will now have to re-do and revise the air quality report to meet the requirements of the judges' decision.**

The decision also clarifies California law as to the long-debated "standard of review" that courts must apply when a public agency's project approval is challenged for violations of CEQA.

The Supreme Court has now definitively resolved the dispute, fully agreeing with the appellants and with the Fifth District Court of Appeal's ruling in 2014: courts must exercise independent judgment as to whether EIRs comply with CEQA's information disclosure mandates, and cannot simply defer to evidence and arguments presented to the court by the agency and project sponsors, as argued by Friant Ranch.

This decision will not only improve the environmental review of the Friant Ranch project in Fresno County — requiring meaningful analysis of public health impacts from significant levels of project-related air pollution — but also profoundly affect the way the state environmental law must be implemented throughout California.

The long-running case has been in litigation since 2011 and included a fundraiser in 2014 when now-deceased poet laureate Philip Levine of Fresno spoke and read his poetry at the Newman Center, sponsored by LWVF and supported by our members and the public.

THANK YOU, SARA!



Voter Services

by Liz Shields



Another record! Thanks go to our forty eight League members and friends who unfolded and duplicated ballots for 680 hours, staffed the phones for 207 hours and helped with the CANVASS for 76 hours. All this work added up to an astounding 963 hours of work for the Elections Department during October and November. It will save us from a lot of car washes and bake sales.

Temporary help like ours enables the Elections Department and in turn Fresno County to control costs. In addition, our knowledge of election procedures and our familiarity with local district boundaries allow us to provide accurate information to anxious phone callers around Election Day. For example, we had several calls from voters wanting to know why Measure P was not on their ballots. League members staffing the phones were able to



determine that they lived in County "islands" within the city and were ineligible to vote on that measure.

The importance of voting cannot be emphasized enough, especially in local races. While overall

voter turnout was 56.4% in Fresno County, high for a midterm election, in several of the smaller city council and school board races only one or two votes separated the winner from the runner-up.

In March 2019 elections will be held for Clovis City Council, for Fresno County Supervisor District #2 and a measure aimed at reopening Coalinga Regional Medical Center. These elections typically have small voter turnouts but considering the importance of the three issues it is hoped that there will be greater participation this time. Again, my heartfelt thanks to the League members and friends who responded so enthusiastically to my plea for volunteers to work with the Elections Department. I hope you enjoyed the camaraderie and the sense of accomplishment as much as I did.

Complaint procedure described by Independent Police Review

by Francine Farber

You can enroll in the Citizens Police Academy and for one day a week for 15 weeks learn all about the department, visit and shoot at the gun range, mingle with police dogs and even allow them to "attack" you if you are so inclined.

This invitation was included in the information from John Gliatta, Independent Police Review, at the League's Lunch and Learn last month. We also learned that state guidelines recommend answering a 911 call within 15 seconds; Fresno is working on this and has funded more 911 operators, a grueling job dealing with mostly upset public.

You can also file a complaint about an officer or a procedure by calling 621-7000, or preferably filing on line or at one of the Fresno City community centers. By googling AB953, you can learn about RIPA, the Racial Identity and Profiling Act, which requires information be reported to the Department of Justice about police stops. Police departments of Fresno's size must begin detailed reporting of all officer "stops" this month, which will then be available on the state's RIPA website.

In response to questions about officer involved shootings, Gliatta, who was a SWAT team instructor, explained that officers cannot shoot to only maim someone wielding a gun or other lethal weapon because of the difficulty in hitting a moving target, thus putting the officer and perhaps civilians at high risk for fatality. He makes a quarterly report on this and other police actions; the next one will appear on line in January.

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Education

by Kay Bertken



es attending a debate of the issues by the class. The Partnership's other direct service program, *The Democracy Project*, is also expanding its

Next Meetings January 9, 23
In person or streaming on line

The Children's Movement met to provide input for the Cradle to Career Partnership's blueprint for funding and advocacy. TCM members from school districts, local government agencies and non-profits brainstormed ideas for targeting efforts for the pre-conception to five-year-old range of the continuum. The Partnership is aiming for a late spring completion of their blueprint.

Rewarding community service

The Civic Education Partnership is continuing to follow and engage in the merger of the CSUF Bonner Center for Civic and Character Education with the CSUF Ethics Center. The Bonner Center provides awards to schools for excellence in civic and character work, an ambition that melds with the work of the Ethics Center. The Civic Education Partnership has also determined to work locally (while the State efforts meander) to provide recognition to students who have performed community service. The plan is to provide a seal on the graduation diploma recognizing student service.

Students research local issues

The Partnership also continues to facilitate and expand the adoption of the *Operation Protect and Defend* curriculum. This weeklong curriculum engages students in discussion of a particular court case chosen by the Federal Judiciary of Sacramento that culminates with volunteer judg-

reach. This curriculum engages middle school students to identify a local issue, research that issue, then devise and implement a solution.

The single Fresno Unified Board meeting since the Thanksgiving holiday saw the swearing in of the newly elected trustees and the election of Claudia Casares as president and Carol Mills as board clerk.

Effects of herbicide questioned

There was a discussion of the health effects on children and employees on the use of the chemical Roundup in maintenance of the schools. A court case in San Francisco awarded a large settlement to be paid by Monsanto to a Benecia school district custodian who claimed his non-Hodgkins lymphoma was a result of his longterm exposure to Roundup as he sprayed the herbicide.

Hundreds of other such cases against Monsanto are pending despite the fact that the EPA and other nations have deemed it safe and it is legal in the United States and Europe. The trustees instructed staff to look for alternatives.

New trustee Islas asked for assurance that local vendors with good employee practices be favored in the awarding of contracts for the fresh fruit and vegetable program. The trustees approved the audited financial statements for 2017-2018 that

close out the current year budget. Trustee Slatik questioned the existence of a difference between budgeted and actual results over the past few years that led to larger than expected reserves. He did not seem satisfied with staff explanations.

Budget needs vs charter schools

The new trustees were notably vocal in their first board meeting. Discussion of the audited budget was of particular interest given the League's study of charter schools. Our report highlighted a concern about vagueness and implementation practices in the authorization and reauthorization processes that allow for a district to deny authorization to a school that then gets authorized by another agency in spite of evidence of the school's problems.

The closing of the FUSD budget recognized a \$400,000 loss on the basis of FUSD's denial of reauthorization for Kepler. Charter authorizers earn a large administrative fee for charters that operate under their purview. Kepler was subsequently allowed to continue when its charter was re-authorized by the County Office of Education. This is not the first time that charters have continued after a review by Fresno Unified found them deficient. Trustee Carol Mills suggested that if this were to be the pattern, the district ought to think more carefully about denying a charter.

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Behavioral Health by Carolyn Evans



The Fresno County Behavioral Health Board began its December meeting celebrating the Hmong New Year with traditional dancers. The colorful costumes and music made for a joyful beginning for the meeting.

The Department of Behavioral Health has 5-year contracts with the Youth Leadership Institute and California Health Collaborative for Substance Use Disorder prevention services. These programs are “Friday Night Live” aiming to reduce alcohol use among youth 10 to 25 years old; “Performing Above the High” (PATH) that attempts to reduce the use of marijuana among the same age group; and “Lock It Up,” that encourages the proper storage and disposal of prescription and over-the-counter medications.

Reduction in alcohol and drug use

A consultant firm conducted an annual evaluation on these programs and reported findings to the Board. In the second year of the contract, all programs are showing some reduction in the use of alcohol and drugs. With the legalization of marijuana, it is becoming a greater challenge to convince young people to avoid its use, so the marijuana reduction

program shows less success than the other two programs. Each year there will be more data to show trends, which will be helpful in planning future prevention programs.

The Board and service providers have been concerned about the lack of substance abuse disorder residential programs for co-occurring individuals, especially those with serious mental illnesses. With the new Drug MediCal redesign, counties will be required to offer all levels of residential services within three years; therefore, there should be inpatient services available within that timeline—if providers are willing to offer those services to high intensity clients. The Department and the Board are optimistic that a few local providers will be willing to expand their services to include this group of individuals.

New county jail health services firm

California Forensic Medical Group/Wellpath currently holds the contract for all health services, including behavioral health, in the Fresno County jail and at the Juvenile Justice Campus. Representatives introduced the company and the personnel working in Fresno to the Board. The Board is planning a site visit to the jail to learn more about the behavioral health care that is being provided to inmates, especially to those with serious mental illnesses; the Board also plans a visit to the Juvenile Justice Campus.

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PROGRAM PLANNING * February 23

You would never skip voting in a local, state or national election . . .

so don't skip our program planning meeting because that is your voice in selecting local and state League Priorities for the coming year.

Please send your thoughts on priorities by January 10 to Pat Campbell at 352-5192, soupsbooks5@comcast.net or Marianne Kast 270-7937, fourkasts@gmail.com.

See you at the meeting!



Pat Campbell
Director
Program Planning



Should physicians, and especially physicians' groups, "stay in their own lane?" The NRA thinks so when it comes to gun control legislation.

This issue flared recently when the American College of Medicine advocated a program of gun control legislation. The NRA's beef with physicians goes back decades, when the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported that gun ownership had no protective value for citizens.

NRA nixes gun research

The NRA soon put an end to the CDC's gun research, as well as proposals for computerized gun registration and background checks, permanent firearm identifiers, computer chip control locks, and liability for owners of misused weapons. The NRA (along with even more aggressive gun lobbies) successfully deflected efforts to sustain limits or bans on military-type weapons, unregistered "gun show" sales, open-carry permits, silencers, armor-piercing bullets, outsize magazines, and devices capable of converting single-fire weapons to continuous-fire machine guns.

As a physician with an abiding interest in social psychopathology, I attribute these efforts on behalf of arming our society not to a rational interest in individual self-defense (my favorite conservative, Bill Buckley, advocated a sawed-off shotgun in your closet), but rather to a collective delusional state, fostered by an internet echo chamber of conspiracy theories focused on governmental overreach or suppression of individuality. It is ironic that much feared authoritarian state at core of this delusion is one we (and other developed countries) have been lurching toward in recent times.

What should doctors do?

But this article is not about guns, but rather about the social responsibilities of doctors. Are we asked by our schools or by our oaths and declarations to do anything more than provide individuals with competent, honest, confidential, prejudice-free, dutiful care? We are not, but should that declaration be enough?

The case for a broader societal responsibility was made repeatedly by the Dean of the UCLA School of Medicine for its first 24 years, Sherman Mellinkoff (*not* "melon head" in German, as some fellow students impishly suggested). He gave several lectures to the student body every year in which he (as a paradigm of the classically educated physician) repeatedly elaborated on medicine's responsibility to the "polis," the supremely creative city-state of early Greek civilization and model for advanced modern societies.

Charity care "disappeared"

It was possible in 1970 for physicians to commit a portion of their practice to treating non-paying patients. In fact, charity care had been considered an ethical requirement of physicians in private practice by the AMA and by local medical societies since their inception. But by 1970 local and federal programs were pre-empting this role for doctors, and less than a decade later charity care disappeared as the costs of medications and diagnostics swamped physician fees. So in what other arenas should doctors provide help and guidance for their polis?

Doctors have responsibility

Are physicians leaving "their lane" in advocating for gun safety, air pollution control, cheaper medicines, access to clean water and quality nutrition for all, child care and early childhood education?

While any citizen may stand up for these issues, should physicians feel additionally responsible to society for supporting action by charities,

NGO's, and governments on these issues that are so impactful on physical and mental health? And in turn, should their views be given special attention because of their background in science and day-to-day attention to individual health?



My answer is "Hell yes!" The solemn declarations taken by new physicians in the future should be composed to confirm this.

drbertken@comcast.net

Get with the program!

Come to Program Planning on February 23

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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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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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