



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS FRESNO

Volume 77 No. 7

July 2018

Phone: 559-226-VOTE

Web site: <http://my.lwv.org/california/fresno>



Tues. July 10 * 9 a.m.—noon

Annual Board Retreat

All Welcome

741 West Sierra Madre, Fresno

Tuesday, August 14

Regular Board Meeting

5 p.m.—League Office

(tentative date)

Monday, August 27

Women's Equality Day

Who is Our Honoree?

Upcoming Lunch & Learns

- ◆ Transportation
- ◆ Office of Independent Review

Members and guests are invited to all League meetings and events



The *Fresno*

VOTER



Annual Board Retreat: Tuesday, July 10, 9 a.m.— noon

Discussion: "Transformational Journey": Modernizing League, and report from LWVUS Convention

Members and Guests invited; 741 West Sierra Madre, Fresno

Lunch will be served; Call to let us know you will attend 472-3018

Women's Equality Day

Honoring Rei Hotoda

First Woman Conductor

in the history of the

Fresno Philharmonic

Monday, August 27



Look for details in August Voter

President's Message



For me, Election Day is as important as Thanksgiving Day, but with many fewer calories, and so much information to gnaw on.

Elections officials (and some League members, too) are still finishing the final steps required before the June 5 primary election results are certified, and many in California are wondering about the effects of two relatively new changes to our state-wide voting: the "top-two" primary system and the 100% vote-by-mail process that five California counties tried out. How do these improvements affect voter turn-out?

First, the "top-two" or "jungle" primary has led to a proliferation of candidates in statewide primary races. Previously the top parties in California would usually put forth a single candidate in each partisan statewide race, but now the field is open to anyone who qualifies to run and pays the filing fees. In each race there are often two or more candidates from several of the parties. The resulting long, long list of candidates is, I believe, a deterrent to voting for new or reticent voters. The length of the ballot and its small print are already intimidating to some. I believe that the search for a familiar name among a random candidate listing of 27 (for governor) or 11 (for lieutenant governor) or 17 (for U.S. Senator) requires more patience than many voters have if they have not considered their choice and located their candidate on the sample ballot before entering the voting booth.

In Fresno County, we are hovering around 30% voter turn-out for this primary election. That's about 5% below the statewide voter turn-out level reported so far. However, the five counties that piloted 100% vote-by-mail systems report a combined average turn-out of nearly 45%. The improvement is significant, and as more voters realize the convenience and location of voting centers in their county, I expect the turn-out will improve further. But still, less than half of registered voters are voting.

What can we do to improve voter turn-out? That has to be a focus of our League work.

Marianne

MEMBER NEWS

Please edit your roster



New Member

Ann and Jeffrey Nenning
6355 North Spalding Ave.
Fresno, CA 93710
261-2932
annnenning@gmail.com

Correction

Nancy Hatcher
nhatcher46@gmail.com

A donation to League makes a great birthday or holiday gift or as a memorial. Please make checks out to

LWVF

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Fresno, CA 93710

The League is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization so your dues payments and donations are tax deductible and gratefully accepted.



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

Mailing Address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710

Volume 77. No. 7 Editor: Francine M. Farber

Join a Priority Committee!

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The League-produced video of the LWV Tulare County's panel discussion, "Where Do You Get Your News?" will be shown on Xfinity and ATT Uverse through CMAC beginning July 4 at 5 p.m. Bill Jordan and Terri Figgs recorded and edited the discussion, which featured four Valley journalists and was moderated by Mark Keppler of the Maddy Institute. LWVF will be the subject of a public service announcement produced by Mass Communications and Journalism students at CSUF. We are beginning to work on events to honor the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote, which will be marked in August, 2020.

Chair: Marianne Kast: fourkasts@gmail.com

Next meeting: Friday, July 13, 10 a.m. Stone Soup



EDUCATION

The committee is still accumulating funding information for its report on charter schools.



Chair: Kay Bertken: kayb@csufresno.edu

Next meeting: to be scheduled

HOUSING

The Rental Housing Improvement Act has been slow to begin; one of our members twice called a number designated by the city to provide information and never got a call back. An article in the Bee indicated that the city had launched its online rental housing registry; 25,000 letters were sent out asking property owners and managers to register online within 30 days or possibly face a fine ranging from \$100 to \$1000. 13,000 properties representing 15% of the 90,000+ units within the city have registered.

We are also working on a video depicting successful affordable housing projects in cities such as Toronto and Denver, where they have used inclusionary housing programs and established Affordable Housing Trust Funds.



Chairs: Marianne Kast: fourkasts@gmail.com

Nyla Zender: nylajz@comcast.net

Next meeting: Wed., July 25, 1 p.m. Stone Soup

Water News

by Diane Merrill



There are new developments in the effort to solve the complex problem of providing safe and affordable drinking water to small disadvantaged communities in California that lack this basic human necessity. Many of the communities are located in the San Joaquin Valley.

LWVC supported Human Right to Water legislation passed by the California legislature in 2012 as well as Senate Bill 623, to establish a Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund by levying a new charge of less than \$1 per month on municipal water users throughout the state. This type of charge has been used for many years to support telephone, internet, and

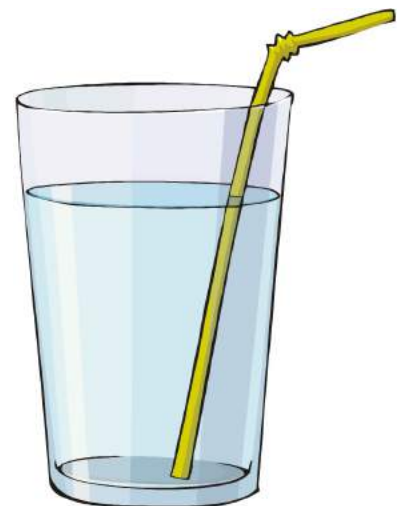
other basic services for small communities.

Wording similar to that of SB 623 was incorporated into 2018/2019 budget negotiations, but was abandoned as part of a budget compromise. There was agreement by the legislature to allocate \$23.5 million from the general fund for "safe drinking water actions later in the legislative session". Governor Brown has committed to working with the legislature to address drinking water issues this year.

A key issue is that the bond funding and general fund monies that can be used for construction of water infrastructure do not provide the kind of ongoing, multi-year funding needed to assure that the community can afford to continue to operate and maintain the equipment. This is especially true for communities that need modern

water treatment technology to meet water quality standards. Another issue is that the availability of general fund monies can be highly variable from year to year.

Provision of safe and affordable drinking water is an important matter, and LWVC and our league will continue to keep informed on this issue.





Fresno Unified Trustees passed the 2018-2019 Local Control Accountability Plan and their budget after months of discussion around individual expenditure recommendations.

250 new hires

Thirty-two million dollars in new spending was included in the \$1.3 billion budget. More than 250 new full time equivalent hires were included, primarily teachers to meet the lower class sizes negotiated in the latest agreement with the Fresno Teachers Association. Psychologists and social workers were also added to be devoted to special education and the implementation of a more focused tiered approach to social-emotional student supports



Reserve funds to decrease

As passed and with the currently anticipated revenues from the state, the District's reserve is slated to go down over the next three years from 8.77% next year to 3.27% in 2020-2021 in spite of six million dollars in new funding added by the Governor in his May revision of the State budget. With that money added to the reserve fund, those reserves are still anticipated to fall below the Board's policy of maintaining a 5% to 10% reserve during stable financial times that helps protect the dis-

trict during the unpredictable downturns of California's economy.

One charter renewed, one not **

In addition to the finally concluded budget discussions, the Board renewed the charter of The School of Unlimited Learning for five more years. SOUL has been operated by Fresno's Economic Opportunities Commission since 1998. It serves students at high risk of not completing high school. Unlike the data presented for Kepler, which was denied its renewal earlier in the month, SOUL's information indicated that it outperformed comparable schools in Fresno Unified. While its students did not measure up to the district as a whole, it outperformed Cambridge and J.E. Young—two schools that serve similar at-risk populations.

Sports inclusion

A highlight of the late May meeting was recognition of the District Unified Basketball champions from Fresno High. Unified teams composed of special needs students along with their general education peers have been instituted in FUSD high schools—a terrific example of inclusion and the expansion of extra-curricular activities to more students.

Controversy over dress code

At its last meeting for the school year in June, the Board passed a number of dress code changes that were less restrictive and announced

that there would be no suspensions or expulsions for dress code violations. The changes are intended to comply with legal mandates. However, there was some dissension among trustees because individual schools will be allowed to set up dress code regulations beyond the basic ones in the board policy. These additions will have to be based on input from the community and study by the district review committee before they are made official.



Summer plans

Superintendent Nelson announced that 14,000 students will be enrolled in summer school for academic support, credit recovery, and accelerated course work. No-cost swimming lessons will also be available. During the summer there will be solar installations in a number of school parking lots as well as construction, painting and considerable other work on facilities improvements.

**CHARTER UPDATE

On an appeal from Kepler officials, the Fresno County Office of Education approved a three-year continuation of Kepler's charter, conditional on closely monitored designated improvements.

Next Board Meeting

August 8

AT&T Ch.99 and

Streaming on your computer

Behavioral Health

by Francine M. Farber



The Community Forum sponsored by the Behavioral Health Board last month at the Betty Rodriguez Library yielded a number of suggestions from over 20 participants. Many of the suggestions are not new, but point up continuing needs. A few of them include the need to make more information available about behavioral health services; how to navigate through the system of care; affordable housing; support services for the LGBTQ community; and need for more psychiatric beds in local inpatient hospitals.

In response to a BHB request for a quarterly update about supportive housing provided through the Department of Behavioral Health, Director Dawan Utecht provided an extensive description of these facilities. **The guiding philosophy is that when working with homeless individuals with behavioral health symptoms, housing comes first.** A technical assistance grant to the program “No Place Like Home” will allow the department to enter into a contract by late August with a consultant with permanent supportive housing experience.

At this time over 300 individuals are living in permanent supportive housing. The “support” involves counseling regarding adjusting to living in a permanent space and gaining skills in everyday activities like shopping, budgeting, planning meals, etc. It does not include treatment. The supportive housing is sometimes located in a multi-unit permanent site, and sometimes occurs in scattered sites throughout the community. Hundreds of other individuals with varying degrees of behavioral health involvement are living in “board and care” and “room and board homes” throughout the community.

The Board also heard a review of the Department’s services for children. These include programs at the Heritage Center, the Youth Wellness Center, Children’s Mental Health Outpatient, Expansion Day Treatment Program, and School-Based Teams which serve students in Fresno metropolitan and rural areas. A detailed description of these programs can be found on the Department’s web site under “Children’s Services.” Many other programs for children are provided by agencies under contract to the Department.

Voter Services

by Liz Shields



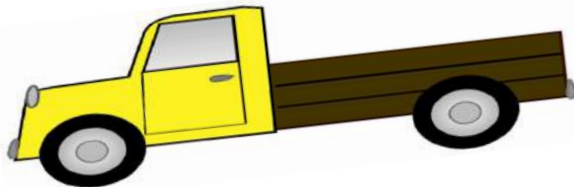
Over 40 League members and others helped with unfolding ballots and staffing the phone bank for the Elections Department for the June Primary. Over 376 hours were spent unfolding ballots and approximately 100 hours were spent on the phones answering voter questions and recording voter concerns. Voter turnout was 30% for Fresno County

In an attempt to increase voter turnout in non-presidential election years the Secretary of State is testing new voter procedures passed into law in 2016 in five counties in California including Madera County. After analysis and fixing glitches, the new procedures will be introduced statewide in 2020.

In each of these test counties all voters received mail-in ballots which could be filled out and dropped off at regional centers from 4 to 10 days prior to the election date or they could vote in person at these centers. Preliminary observations in Sacramento County indicate that more voter education is necessary as over 200,000 ballots were dropped off on Election Day alone; some centers whose opening hours did not coincide with 7 a.m. start of polling in California had ballots pushed under doors. However, initial estimates indicate that voter turnout in Sacramento County will be greater than 46% which is the highest turnout for a non-presidential primary in over two decades.

Thanks to the following volunteers during the Primary

Ruth Afifi	Karen Goodman	Mary Perich
Patsy Andersen	Nancy Griesser	Radley Reep
Sandy Aune	Diane Hanzlichek	Louise Richardson
Janet Baker	Margaret Johnson	Mary Savala
Kay Bertken	Terry Johnson	Mary Scully
Susan Beryamin	Marianne Kast	Liz Shields
Lisa Bryant	Jeanine King	Laura Silberman
Pat Campbell	Susan Kuhn	Judi Steele
Jacquie Canfield	Mary Ann Lewis	Sue Strauss
Kathi Carrle	John Meidell	Barbara Swan
Betty Cornlisen	Diane Merrill	Jennifer Williamson
Ken Cornelisen	Beverly Messiner	Sylvia Woodburne
Francine Farber	Carolyn Murphy	Jane Worsley
Murray Farber	Judith Parker	Lenore Yousef
Katherine Ferdolage	Yolanda Partida	Nyla Zender
Terri Figgs	Charlotte Pavelko	



The effort to repeal Senate Bill 1, as passed in 2017, has a very good chance at qualifying for California's November state ballot. Fresno County voters should consider the following facts before voting on the "gas tax repeal" in November.

- ◆ There are 6,536 "locally" maintained streets and roads in Fresno County- 3,261 urban and 3,274 rural miles, and we travel 14 million miles daily on our "local" streets and roads.
- ◆ More than 80% of California's roads are owned by cities and counties.
- ◆ Fresno County is responsible for 59% of the "local" road network.
- ◆ Fresno County's road network is the economic "backbone" for moving over \$6 billion in agricultural goods and services.
- ◆ Approximately 93% of all commute trips in Fresno County occur in a car or truck. Every trip by car, bus, bicycle or on foot begins and ends on local streets and sidewalks.
- ◆ The San Joaquin Valley is one of the fastest growing regions in the state and that growth will result in more vehicle miles traveled on local streets and roads.
- ◆ Pavement conditions in our Central Valley region are at an "at risk" condition, and conditions are expected to deteriorate even further if pavement and rehabilitation needs are not met. Delayed street/road infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation only increases the cost of repairs in the future. Poor local street and road conditions add to the cost of vehicle maintenance. Poor road conditions are safety hazards for both motorized vehicles and bicycles.
- ◆ 48% of California's bridges are owned by cities and counties – over 12,000 local bridges whose needs are estimated at \$4.6 billion over the next 10 years.
- ◆ Road and street infrastructure are not just roads and bridges but include: Sidewalks, curb ramps, curbs and gutters, storm drains, street lights, street signs, and retaining walls
- ◆ Street and road funding has fallen over the last 10 years from 75% from state and federal monies to 50%, leaving half of the costs for local governments.

The good news: the increase in California gasoline excise tax of 12 cents per gallon, a 20 cent per gallon increase in diesel fuel, a \$100 annual zero emission vehicle fee, a \$25 to

\$75 vehicle registration fee increase, and an increase in gasoline excise tax tied to increase in the Consumer Price Index will cost motorists about \$10/month.

65% of revenues from SB1 must go to "fix-it-first" and will provide \$32 million in additional funding for maintenance and rehabilitation projects to Fresno county and its incorporated cities for local streets and roads. \$58 million over the next 5 years goes to improvements to Veterans Blvd; SR99 interchange SB1 revenues to Fresno County will double alternative transportation funding to \$4.8 million over the next 4 years.

Consider local street and road maintenance needs, and benefits and costs of the tax, before making up your mind about the merits of the new gas tax and its proposed repeal.

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Men and Women age 16 and above Making Democracy Work

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.

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