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The

Fresno

VOTER

Volume 79

No. 7

July 2020



Monday, July 13

Board Meeting

4 p.m. Via **ZOOM**

Look for on-line
Invitation

Tuesday,
July 21
SPECIAL
EVENT

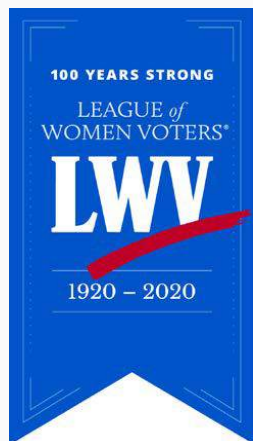
Wednesday, August 26

Women's Equality Day

5:30 p.m. Via ZOOM

Look for on-line
invitation

Members and Guests
invited to all League
meetings and events



Can new ideas for housing really make a difference?

Join us for a conversation with

Senator Anna Caballero

and

Matt Levin,

Housing Reporter from Cal Matters



Tuesday, July 21, 5:30 p.m.* ZOOM



Never been on Zoom before?

- ◆ Type ZOOM in your search bar.
- ◆ Click on "Sign in"
- ◆ Click on "if you are a new member, join for free."
- ◆ Follow simple directions.

The ZOOM link will be sent to you in your e-mail. We will open it at 5:15 p.m. so new Zoomers can receive assistance navigating the site if they need it.

President's Message

by Marianne Kast



Even though technical glitches caused myriad short-term frustrations, I am proud of the League's commitment to facilitating widespread participation to its 54th National Convention while managing over 1700 delegates and additional observers online.

Attending a League convention is never a relaxing time; attendees need to follow the Convention workbook closely to understand discussions and votes as they come before the body. The whole LWVUS staff worked hard managing slides and videos, monitoring "raise your (online) hand" and poll votes, and muting and unmuting participants, to allow the business of the Convention to be completed.

The League is in healthy financial condition, though plans call for dipping into excess reserve funds during the coming year since fundraising is expected to fall due to the pandemic. PMP (per-member-payment) will remain at \$32 for LWVUS (we also pay \$28 PMP to LWV of Calif), and dues will now be free, permanently, for students. Since 2016 the League has mapped a "transition roadmap," to modernize the League brand, critically examine operations and traditions, diversify its Board and staff.

The Convention overwhelmingly supported continuing the League's program, Making Democracy Work® (ensuring a free, fair and accessible electoral system for all eligible voters by focusing on Voting Rights, Improving Elections and advocacy for the National Popular vote Compact, Campaign Finance/Money in Politics, and Redistricting and to continue work on urgent issues: Climate Change, the Equal Rights Amendment, Health Care, Gun Safety, and Immigration). Added to this program by the Convention is *advocacy toward the Abolition of the Electoral College*.

All current LWVUS positions were retained and two positions were added by concurrence at the Convention:

Transfer of Federal Public Lands (full position at LWV New Mexico)

The League believes that federal public lands should benefit all Americans. The lands should remain under the jurisdiction of the federal government with Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands managed according to the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield policy. We support improvements in management and regulation.

Position on Electoral Systems (full position at LWV Sacramento County)

Support electoral systems at each level of government that encourage participation, are verifiable and auditable, and enhance representation for all voters.

(continued on page 7)

MEMBER NEWS

Please edit your roster



SUE STRAUSS

We deeply regret to announce the passing of Sue Strauss on June 19 at age 78. Sue joined LWVF in 1971 and would have become a life member next year. She served as League president from 1974-75 and treasurer from 1997-99. Sue attended many LWVF workshops and enjoyed unfolding ballots at election time.

VIRGINIA BIGGS

We deeply regret to inform you that we have received word that Virginia Biggs passed away in May at the home of her daughter in Israel, where she had moved a number of years ago at the age of 85. Virginia had been our treasurer in the late 70's and 80's and her Fresno home was used as a meeting place for the Board.

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

Mailing address: 1345 Bulldog Lane Fresno, CA 93710

Volume 79, No.7 Editor: Francine M. Farber

It's always a good time for a gift to the League. LWVF is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization so your gift and membership are tax deductible and gratefully accepted.

Remember us in your estate planning.



Voter Services

by Liz Shields



LWVUS is urging members to contact their elected representatives about three major issues:

- **To demand a hearing in the Senate on the *For the People Act*.** This legislation seeks to strengthen voting rights, expand voters' access to the ballot box by providing for vote-by-mail ballots, early voting and same day voter registration. It also includes reducing the role of big money in politics. It passed the House of Representatives on March 8, 2019 and has languished in the Senate after a second reading on March 14, 2019.
- **To sign a petition on the LWVUS web site (<https://www.lwv.org/voting-rights>) in support of D.C. statehood for Congressional representation.** More than 700,000 residents live in D.C., which is more than that of Wyoming or Vermont, yet its residents still lack voting members in the U.S. House and Senate.
- **To provide additional funding to states to provide safe voting procedures and protect the right to vote in light of continuing covid-19 health crisis.** In March, Congress added \$400 million in aid to states to address necessary policies to safeguard our elections during the Covid-19 public health crisis. The November election is fast approaching, and it is imperative Congress provides the additional funding to transform our election system to respond to this crisis. The League is supporting inclusion of \$4 billion in the next stimulus package to ensure that voting remains fair, accessible and safe.

Contact Senator Feinstein at

<https://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/e-mail-me>

Contact Senator Kamala Harris at

<https://www.harris.senate.gov/contact/email>

LWVC is working with other voting rights advocates to follow up on Governor Newsom's mandate that all registered voters receive a vote-by-mail ballot and to ensure the voting location requirements allow voters to receive in-person voting services where needed.

Local Note: Brandi Orth has posted a comprehensive statistical report on the visits by Fresno County voters to each of the 53 Vote Centers during the 10 days prior to Election and on Election Day. Ten of the Vote Centers were open for the entire 11 days; the rest were open for

(continued on page 7)

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



Director Dawan Utecht from the Department of Behavioral Health reported to the Behavioral Health Board at its June meeting that despite covid-19 the Department has continued to provide services to a majority of its clients. Mental health services continue to be in demand, but requests for treatment services for substance use disorders have declined.

Most services are provided by telemedicine, including virtual meetings and phone calls. The clinic is open for medication, to administer injections, and for other urgent situations. The crisis centers are open for emergencies and for clients needing inpatient care. Some clients seem to prefer telemedicine to in-person appointments. Older clients like the convenience of receiving services at home; young people are very comfortable with electronic communication, so enjoy receiving services remotely.

Of course, the Department is very concerned about expected budget cuts. Staff will be evaluating programs, and determining how best to use its monies. In addition to reductions in the state budget, the Department is expecting less funding from the Mental Health Services Act, which pays for many contracted programs.

Ordinarily the BHB conducts site visits to various programs in the community. Visits have been suspended during the Covid-19 crisis, but Board members still want to know how services are being provided to clients. The Department arranged a virtual tour of the Multi-Agency Access Program (MAP) at the Poverello House. MAP points are located at various locations throughout the county, but the program at Poverello House serves many more individuals than other locations.

Most people come to MAP seeking a particular service; over 50% are looking for housing. A screening tool is used to determine what other services might be needed. Approximately two-thirds of the clients are homeless; unfortunately it is not possible to house them all, but individuals are linked to service providers who seek to find shelter for them as quickly as possible. MAP staff members link clients to other services as well, even driving them if necessary, to assure the appropriate connections. During Covid-19 staff continues to serve clients by observing social distancing, requiring masks, and meeting outdoors, whenever possible.

The Behavioral Health Board's next regularly scheduled meeting will be on July 15 at 3:30 pm. If you would like to join via Webex, you may request to be added to the distribution list at dominja@fresnocountyca.gov.

evansalca@comcast.net



NEXT FUSD Meetings: August 12 and 26

Watch streaming on FUSD website, Xfinity ch 94;

comment at publiccomment@fresnounified.org

The two last FUSD school board meetings of the year highlighted the difficulty of making decisions in the face of great uncertainty. In its first June meeting, the District had to adopt the budget for 2020-21, a budget that was based on preliminary understandings of their revenues. At the next meeting, having decided on budget cuts, the trustees discussed plans for opening school in the fall, accepting the need for a flexible response to the covid status in our area.

Trustees voted on a tentative set of budget cuts necessitated by State revenue declines. They approved, with some dissension, a plan to cut \$27 million from the budget for the 2020-21 school year, with further cuts expected in the next two years and suspected revisions within the year ahead.

Significant budget cuts

Significant cuts included a delay in implementing ten new designated schools that were to receive extra funding for targeted attention to their high risk, low performing populations, including longer school days with accompanying extra pay for teachers. Other cuts included reassignment of some teachers on special assignment back to specific school sites and reductions in central administration, mostly unfilled positions and travel expenditure.

The Board received a huge number of communications from the public. Many of them were from teachers defending the district contribution to their health care fund. There was no change in that contribution included in the adopted budget. Many other members of the public requested eliminating the con-

tracts for police on the campuses. Some trustees cast negative votes on the adopted budget because of that issue, but the Board did not end police presence on the campuses. It has, however, directed staff to negotiate with the city so as to pay only for actual time spent by the school based officers.

Wide survey for fall plans

In preparation for planning the reopening of schools in the fall, the district surveyed and received comments from 10,000 parents, 3,000 staff and 5,000 students. Preferences were remarkably similar among the groups; around 75% wanted to go back to face-to-face instruction and 25% wanted to stay home and have virtual instruction. In response to that feedback, staff developed a two track plan with virtual instruction offered to parents who opt for that and a flexible plan to open schools in the fall for face to face instruction.

The virtual option would include a more rigorous approach than was available in the spring. The back-to-schools plan allows for phased adjustments to split sessions or full closure depending on the status of local infections. Staff hopes to have information from parents and staff as to their choices by mid July, when they will also have a better idea about the local infection rates. Matching staff choices and student choices will be the logistical challenge of the summer.

Comprehensive planning

District planning has been comprehensive and ongoing, including busing, cleaning, signage, public service announcements and food service considerations. Distancing, face masks, hand

washing stations and cleaning supplies plus specific health screening protocols are all part of the planning.

The district has a plan to phase in athletics and band activities. Initially only small group conditioning will be pursued, followed by practice for low contact sports followed by actual competitions for low contact and practice for contact sports. Phasing will depend again on the virus situation. Whether any competitions will be held in the fall will depend on the athletic organizations that control those meetings.

While acknowledging some risks involved in all their plans, the trustees also recognize that being in school is the safest alternative for many children in our area.

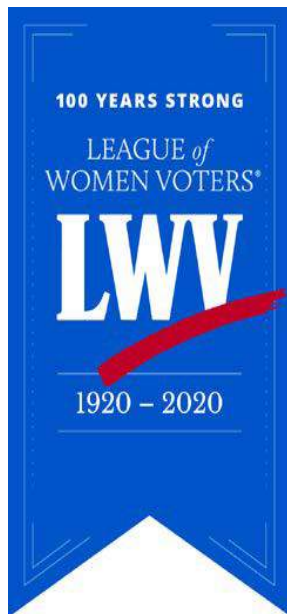
Large summer enrollment

More immediate news includes the fact that 18,000 students have enrolled in online summer



academy, the replacement for regular summer school; and the summer meals distribution program has begun. The African American Academic Acceleration Program will be holding its very successful literacy program again, but online. FUSD has also initiated a Family Technical Support Center where students and families can get computer assistance from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays by calling 457-3939 or emailing the center at LCD@fresnounified.org.

kayb@csufresno.edu



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PBS JULY 6 AND 7 9 P.M.



Women in the Military

Clovis Military Veterans District

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go to www.cvmdistrict.org

Scroll down to News and Updates

click on "Women in the Military"

"The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley"

Robert Burns-

Robert Burns was so right. We had great plans for the Suffrage Centennial and they have definitely "gang agley." Fortunately we were able to accomplish some of them before covid-19 descended.

In January we had a sensational kick-off to the Centennial Year with a reception and program for the First ladies Exhibit at City Hall, sponsored by the Fresno County Office of the Superintendent. In February we co-sponsored a re-enactment of leading African American suffragists with Black Women Organized for Political Action, and later in that month sponsored an educational symposium about the role of women of color in suffrage for almost 100 students at Fresno City College.

The exhibit at the Madden Library of portraits of 100 Notable Women, past and present, who created positive change in the Fresno region, has been postponed. And our big event in August has also been postponed: the luncheon with featured speaker Jennifer Newsom, the First Partner (and wife) of Governor Newsom, and emcee Ashley Swearengin.

But all is not lost: The National Women's History Alliance has announced that the Suffrage Centennial Year has been extended to August 26, 2021, rather than 2020. It is our intention to re-schedule these events as soon as it is safe to

do so. Realistically, due to a possible "second wave" of the virus, we will probably wait until early spring to select new dates. The luncheon and speaker will be re-proposed for the new anniversary date of August, 2021.

Our plan to work with the Theater Department at Fresno State to produce a play based on the book "Elizabeth Started All the Trouble" is still in place, except that this will be a virtual production rather than in-person and is scheduled for presentation in October. We have added another production to our schedule that is really exciting. Dr. Anna Hamre of the Fresno Community Chorus has commissioned the premiere of a choral work based on suffrage and women's history which is scheduled for production in November. We have the portraits and short biographies of the 100 Notable Women and are working on ways to display them.

You can see we are still very much in a celebratory mode, although it has taken quite a different turn. Thanks to the committee members who continue to make this all possible: Angelica Carpenter, Terri Figgs, Micheline Golden, Sue Goldman, Marie Slater, Nyla Zender.

**- Francine Farber, Chair
Suffrage Centennial Committee**



Climate Change

by Andrea Farber De Zubiria



It is becoming clear to members of Congress on both sides of the aisle that addressing climate change with robust legislation is necessary for a livable future....or at least to help them get elected! There is some new bipartisan legislation related to climate change in the House. I interviewed **Devin Carroll**, a local Agricultural Consultant and longtime climate advocate who heads the volunteer lobby team for Citizens' Climate Lobby Fresno.

Devin Carroll: The Growing Climate Solutions Act was introduced to the House on 6/4/2020 by Republican Senators Mike Braun and Lindsey Graham and Democrats Debbie Stabenow and Sheldon Whitehouse. It consists of:

- A certification program at USDA that will help farmers and forest landowners participate in carbon offset credit markets.
- Certification for Greenhouse Gas Technical Assistance Providers and Third-Party Verifiers.
- Assistance to implement practices that capture carbon, reduce emissions, improve soil health, and make operations more sustainable

- An advisory council of agriculture experts, scientists, producers, and others.

How will this benefit farmers and the climate?

Devin Carroll: Scientists say that soil and trees are much better “drawdown” solutions than technological carbon sequestration. The world’s soils contain more carbon than the atmosphere, and many soils have been carbon-depleted by plowing and other practices. This act will make it much easier for farmers to get paid for storing carbon. The “regenerative” practices to achieve carbon storage are also very beneficial to soils and often improve yields.

The Technical Assistance Providers will show farmers how to document that they are storing carbon, but this still adds to the farmer’s workload. It is similar to certification for organic. Ask any organic grower what they think of the process, and you will hear sighs and complaints. But the extra money makes it worthwhile.

What can voters do?

You can write or call your representative often to let them know that voters want bipartisan legislation that encourages programs that keep more greenhouse gas emissions out of our atmosphere.

afarberdezub@gmail.com

Land use projects still active and interesting

by Radley Reep

The League has been interested in three high-profile land use projects in Fresno County. It now appears that none of these projects will be finalized until well into 2021.

CEMEX Application to Mine in the San Joaquin River Bottom

Last December, CEMEX, an international mining and building corporation, filed an application with the County of Fresno to allow a mine operation within the San Joaquin Riverbottom just below Friant to excavate bedrock to a depth 600 feet



ty held an Environmental Impact Review (EIR) scoping meeting. About three dozen members of the public used that opportunity to express environmental concerns. Among them were increased truck traffic coming into north Fresno, worsening air quality and the possi-

over a 100-year period.

On June 24 the County

bility of adverse impacts to the river or nearby water wells. Those who live adjacent to the mine said they were worried about “fly rocks” from blasting and the lowering of their property values.

A point of contention was the question of public access to information. Several people said they wanted access to the technical studies that CEMEX submitted with its application. Others said they wanted a copy of the audio recording of the June 24 meeting. County staff responded by saying

(continued on page 7)

Land Use Projects *(continued from page 6)*

that they would discuss those possibilities with the County Counsel. Should the County not release the audio recording or the technical studies immediately following peer review, the public may want to consider a Public Records Act request.

The County plans to have a draft EIR ready for public review in January 2021, with final approval possible in August 2021.

Friant Ranch Lawsuit

On December 24, 2018, the California Supreme Court granted us a win in the Friant Ranch lawsuit. As a result of the High Court ruling, the Fresno County Superior Court issued a judgment ordering Fresno County to “*vacate or set aside its approval of the Friant Ranch project and not approve the project before preparing a revised EIR that provides an adequate discussion of health and safety problems that will be caused by the rise in various pollutants resulting from the Project’s development.*”

Believing the Superior Court order to be draconian, Friant Ranch appealed that judgment to the Fifth District Court of Appeal. All the briefs for that proceeding will have been filed by July 3. If any of the parties in the appeal wish the



court to hear oral arguments, then that hearing will likely take place later this summer or fall.

Whether we prevail in the Fifth District Court of Appeal or not, the County will still need to revise the Friant Ranch EIR. Because that process will take many months to complete, the spring or summer of 2021 is the soonest the Board of Supervisors will be able to reconsider project approval.

Fresno County General Plan and Zoning Ordinance

For a period of 15 years, Fresno County has struggled to complete a comprehensive revision of its General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. On April 14 the Fresno County Board of Supervisors approved a new scope of work to complete that project. However, because the County decided not to share the accompanying work timeline with the public, all we know is a statement from Assistant Director of Public Works and Planning Bernard Jimenez to the Board of Supervisors: “*We expect to be back here in approximately 14 months before your Board. That’s the basic timeline.*” That means that something significant could happen in the summer of 2021.

Voter Services

(continued from page 3)

four days up to and including Election Day. 97% of visits occurred during the last four days of the election period. Over 86% occurred on Election Day itself. The Elections Department is working on ways to reduce unnecessary costs while providing necessary services to voters in November.



LWVF will be re-activating the Get Out The Vote

group to start looking at ways to improve voter turnout based on methods shared by LWVUS.

lizs44@yahoo.com

LWVUS CONVENTION

(continued from page 2)

Three resolutions were passed at the Convention. Full text available on the LWVUS site.

- Reaffirming our commitment to immigration reform
- Calling for wide-scale mobilization in the US to restore, protect and fund a sustainable environment and climate.
- Calling for advocacy against systemic racism in the justice system and against police brutality as well as work toward equal protection under the law for black, indigenous and all people of color.

Finally, five amendments to the LWVUS by-laws were proposed. Four were approved by the Convention. The amendments include

- Adding to Purposes and Policies, the policy of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Defining “student” as anyone enrolled full or part-time in any accredited institution
- Requiring Leagues to adhere to local, state and federal law when dispersing funds following dissolution of a League chapter
- Establishing procedure for removal of a Board member whose conduct is detrimental to the organization.

fourkasts@gmail.com



I started my studies at the UCLA School of Medicine in 1968.

Of the 120 students, none were black and three were women. Within two years UCLA's student body grew to 132 students with many more women and the first group of about ten black scholarship students. The latter were placed in a special program intended to provide remedial education in math and sciences during their first year. The Dean's Office explained that these were the best qualified students of color that UCLA could attract, given the intense competition among the top schools for black candidates meeting the elite schools' minimal criteria for GPA and Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) scores.

The uncomfortable reality of this remedial program led to protests by the black students, arguing that they could and would respond to the demands of the curriculum. They also cited the lack of evidence that GPA and MCAT scores predicted performance in medical school and training. In the intervening years, many studies have shown that the black students were correct. UCLA continued to provide scholarships to black students in following years without remedial requirements.

Despite the data, medical schools (and most other professional schools) continue to use cut-offs for GPA and admission test scores in their evaluations for admission. Last year, UCLA announced an increase in its minimum acceptable GPA and MCAT scores, eliciting protests over the likely impact of reducing the diversity of the student body. Professional schools' admission offices certainly struggle over assigning specific values to applicants' statements, backgrounds, personal qualities, neighborhoods of origin, and difficult life stories. UCLA processes 13,000 applications every year, a daunting task. But the challenge of dealing with reams of soft information is partially met with well-staffed, formal Offices of Diversity. The additional confounding problem is money.

As funding declines, tuition increases

Medical schools have been struggling to fund themselves with ever-declining state contributions (as a proportion of total state expenditures) while the cost of retaining medical school faculty and running affiliated hospitals has hyper-inflated. My annual in-state tuition in 1968 was under \$5000 in today's dollars. It is now \$36,000, out-of-state is \$45,000, and the national average for private or

out-of-state tuition is \$56,000. Nationwide there is a nearly exact correspondence between the decline in state funding and increases in tuition income over 40 years, often tracking with periods of economic recession. Medical schools need paying students. The ability to pay tuition becomes a positive factor of specific value in application assessment. High performance on the MCAT promotes the reputation of the school, whose average student scores are reported in various medical school rating publications. These easily valued criteria are inevitable obstacles to increasing black medical school enrollment.

The national deficit in black physicians begins with early childhood education. "The pipeline itself is just too small," says Marc Nivet, chief diversity officer of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC). "The barriers exist up and down the continuum of our segregated education system ... too many of our minority students are in poor-performing or underperforming K-12 school systems."

Economic challenge prevents equity

The AAMC and individual schools have established many programs to advance black students to the MD degree with increasing sophistication and financial support. Based on the standard of producing black physicians in proportion to their percentage of the population (13%), the programs have been an abject failure. The racial distribution of practicing physicians in the U.S.—55% white, 6% black, 6% Hispanic, and 17% Asian—exactly replicates the current medical school enrollment. This is not an encouraging trajectory. In fact, the number of black men entering medical training compared to black women has steadily declined since 1990, creating a unique racial gender gap of three women for every two men. Even with full scholarships, high-performing students still face high room and board costs in urban areas where medical schools are located. Lacking family fortunes to call upon, medical school presents a serious economic challenge.

While the pandemic presents an immediate setback for all government-supported programs, it also has exposed the extent of social and economic inequality faced by blacks. The weaknesses in our democracy that are the backbone of inequality have also been exposed. To a large extent, corrections to these weaknesses—groups all over our country, including ours, have published wish lists—will gradually provide relief for the specific inequalities black candidates face in opportunities to join the medical profession. Faster relief will come from making medical education shorter, more efficient, and cheaper—or even free in return for public service.

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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 - \$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.**

.....
Name _____ Ph. _____ E-mail _____

Address: _____