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**Monday, July 19**  
**4 p.m. ZOOM**  
**Regular Board Meeting**

**Monday, August 9**  
**4 p.m. ZOOM**  
**Regular Board Meeting**

**Thursday, August 26**  
**Women's Equality Day / Details to be announced**



*Our 80th Year!*

# The FRESNO VOTER

Congratulations **NICE GOING!**  
**GREAT!** Way to Go!  
Yea! **FELICITATIONS**

**Congratulations to the LWVF Education committee led by Kay Bertken. Its position on charter schools has been adopted by the State league. Our position is now the “official word” and can be used by all local leagues in California for education and advocacy on this issue.**

The position was developed after a two-year study beginning in 2016. It was undertaken in response to the proliferation of area charter schools and some concerns about their educational and financial procedures. Committee members visited each local charter school, sat in on classes, met with administrators and teachers, and where possible also interviewed students. On-line data was researched about demographics, graduation rates, drop-out rates, attendance, curriculum, and finances. The committee produced a 25-page report that was sent to the charter schools, Fresno Unified, and other interested educational institutions including the state league.

**Below is the position that was adopted at the state convention last month:**

*The League of Women Voters of California supports the implementation and enforcement of academic, equity, transparency and financial standards for the authorization and reauthorization of all charter schools. Education Code regulations with respect to the authorization, reauthorization and oversight of charter schools-- whether independent, dependent, seat-based, independent-study, virtual or other-- should be clear and enforced.*

The League believes that charter schools should

- ◆ be authorized and under the oversight of a locally elected or appointed school board within whose district or county they reside,
- ◆ be governed only by an entity with ties and accountability to the community whose students they serve,
- ◆ provide equitable access to all students and work to have enrollment reflect the demographics of the community served,
- ◆ be required to report the same academic, demographic, attendance, and financial data to the state and the public as any other public school and school district,
- ◆ be required to get authorization for any expansion to new sites (including resource centers) and that any such expansion require an evaluation of their current effectiveness and compliance with their contract, adhere to the California Public Records Act and applicable Open Meeting laws and provisions of the Political Reform Act of 1974.

*(continued on page 8)*

# President's Message



Last month's statewide League of Women Voters' convention was held online, following the 2020 LWV national convention which was also held completely online. "Convention" used to mean a physical gathering, but that definition may be expanding to include electronic get-togethers. Even our local League is torn between online and in-person gatherings, as we recognize the convenience of digital options but miss the sensory experience of being together with our friends.

For me, the most valuable parts of a League convention are the workshops and caucuses. All of this year's workshops were recorded; you can watch them on the LWVC Post Convention page.

Here are a few ideas that interested me:

**LWVC**, utilizing a grant from Snapchat, worked with "influencers" to produce 30-second TikTok videos that encouraged young people of color to vote. Read more about this innovative campaign at <https://lwvc.org/news/ignite-civic-passion-ca>.

**LWV Santa Barbara** distributed *LWV Easy Voter Guides* in food boxes given out by their local food bank, in neighborhood "bodegas," and at housing authority apartment complexes. LWVC Housing and Homelessness Taskforce created a fabulous collection of resources on this issue: Google "LWVC Homelessness Action Policy Toolkit."

**LWV Alameda** created a free online game that teaches civics, news literacy and voting in a fun way (and is looking for help maintaining its currency.) Check it out at <https://verifyit.buzz>

**LWV Contra Costa County** partnered with the county library to present a monthly series, "Community Conversations." Each online presentation addressed interests and needs of the community and utilized the public library's ability for outreach and publicity.

Finally, I'd like to recognize the members of our **LWVF Climate Change and Redistricting** committees who helped us understand ongoing changes in our community. "Transform Fresno," coordinated by Andrea Farber De Zubiria, Lenore Yousef, and Connie Young, was a look at the multi-project plans for southwest Fresno. June's "Local Redistricting Webinar," coordinated by Amy Arambula, Cathy Caples, Sue Goldman, and Common Cause of Northern California, was an explanation of why local community organizations need to be active in the redistricting process.

Thank you for creating opportunities for us to learn.

*Marianne*

**Generous donations were made last month by**

**Louise Richardson**

**Andrea Skiff, in memory of her mother ,  
Bette Peterson**

**Jane Worsley, in memory of John  
Donaldson and Alice Powell**

**Francine Farber, in memory of John  
Donaldson, Bette Peterson, Alice Powell, and  
Shirley Valett**

**Barbara Thomas, in memory of Shirley Valett**

***Donations are still being accepted for the RBG  
Scholarship Fund at San Joaquin College of Law.***

Donations are a great gift for any occasion. LWVF is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization so your gift and membership are tax deductible and gratefully accepted.



## JOHN DONALDSON

John Donaldson passed away on May 23 at age 95. He had been a League member since 2005 and served on the Board of Directors for a number of years with a special interest in transportation issues. An outstanding college athlete with a Ph.D. in physics, he also sang with the Fresno Community Chorus since 1956 as a bass and was the choir director at Community United Church of Christ. He served on the board of Supervisors in the 1970's and again in 2006.

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

**Mailing address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710**

**Volume 80, No. 7 Editor: Francine M. Farber**

## Education

by Kay Bertken



The FUSD Board continued discussing its 2021-2022 budget and adopted it at its last meeting of the school year. A couple of additions to the proposed budget included a teaching artist residency program for grades 4 through 6 and additional restorative justice personnel and training.

### Issue remains of police on campus

The issue of funding a police officer on each of the high school campuses came up again prior to the final budget adoption vote. Fresno Barrios Unidos had multiple speakers at that meeting arguing against the police contract. However, a district survey of students, parents, and teachers revealed a large majority supporting police on campuses. The trustees voted to approve the appropriation after contract agreements with the police included a specified personnel selection method and increased cooperation with district intervention efforts. Currently there are no police assigned to the middle school campuses after trustees tabled a vote on that contract earlier this spring.

### Student groups report on work

At its previous meeting trustees heard from the Student Voice Collaborative, a project of the Diversity Equity and Inclusion work of the district, on their year's activities. The collaborative includes The Black Student Union, Race and Social Action Clubs, and the Global Student League that represents second language students. The latter group is working with the district to promote the district's graduation seal for biliteracy.

Another of the groups, The Gender and Sexuality Alliance, is working on a "Safe Space for All" poster design and is working with the district to expand all-gender restrooms. The special education advisory group is working to support visibility and inclusion of special education students. None of this looks like the high school club experience of yesteryear.

Unscheduled oral communications from the community are still taking up a good portion of the Board meetings.

The Fresno High warrior image and the naming of campuses have been the hot topics. After hearing from numerous emotional Fresno High School alumni asking that the image be retained, the Board approved the budget item that would change the symbol on all school equipment and signage. The alumni have threatened to sue the district and to mount a recall against the board members who approved the allocation.



### Push to change Forkner name

Trustee Slatich's liaison and former Bullard area trustee Michelle Asadoorian, her brother Mark Arax, and other members of the Armenian community are pushing the Board to change the name of Forkner Elementary. Forkner was named for a Fresno developer who included overtly racist restrictions on the ownership of his homes, including prohibitions against sale to Armenians. They are asking to rename the school for Roger Tatarian.

### Money for PreK facilities and training

The District has thus far allocated about \$100 million of the more than \$700 million federal and state one-time funds coming into the district. The LWVF education committee has sent a letter to Superintendent Bob Nelson asking that some of that money be used for facilities that will accommodate the transitional kindergarten expansion envisioned by Governor Newsom.

In addition, we have asked that the district support the cost of the credentialing programs that will provide enough teachers to staff new TK and preschool classes. There is still work to be done outside of the schools to support childcare centers and homes that provide full day and non-traditional hours of childcare. School programs are generally half day and five days a week, not enough time for many working families.

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## *Behavioral Health*

by Carolyn Evans



The Behavioral Health Board learned about the new Family Urgent Response System (FURS). This program serves former and current youth in the foster care system or the probation system.

It is a 24/7 coordinated, statewide and county-level system designed to provide timely response during situations of instability to preserve the relationship of the caregiver and the youth. It will focus on de-escalation, preserving placement, and avoiding psychiatric hospitalization. Like many other State programs, FURS is under funded, but becomes the responsibility of the county.

There was a discussion about requirements for access to Permanent Supportive Housing provided by the Department of Behavioral Health. Most of these housing projects are funded partially by Housing and Urban Development and therefore are restricted to those who meet its definition for homelessness or at-risk of homelessness. Some clients of the Department who would like to live in Permanent Supportive Housing apartments and who need the support provided, are not homeless, so are excluded. The Department agreed to look into supportive housing projects that would be accessible to all clients.

Crestwood's Kingsburg Healing Center is the only Mental Health Recovery Center located in Fresno County. A recovery center is licensed to serve adults with severe and persistent mental health conditions. Prior to this Center's opening, the Department sent all of those clients to facilities out of county; now it contracts for all 66 beds in Kingsburg and is able to keep most clients near home. The Healing Center provides 24-hour supervision and support, medication education and management, individual and group counseling sessions, life skills education, vocational and pre-vocational opportunities, and support and education for substance use disorders. Most individuals stay for six to nine months before moving back into the community. The Board conducted a virtual site visit in June, and is happy to have the Kingsburg Healing Center available for Fresno County residents.

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## *Climate Change*

by Lenore Yousef



The average American is responsible for three times the quantity of greenhouse gases accumulated in the environment per year compared with a global citizen.

People in the Central Valley should be strongly motivated to tackle climate change since we are grappling with very poor air quality which impacts the health of all who live here. What can we do as individuals and what should our governments be doing?

**Transportation is a major source of emissions. See article on page 5**

Our homes are another major source of emissions. The take-away is to go all electric, with the idea that future electricity will be primarily renewable. Install solar panels and heat pumps for heating and cooling; wean off of natural gas (primarily methane). Methane is a potent greenhouse gas which leaks from where it is extracted, stored and from distribution pipes.

Finally, focus on energy efficiency. High efficiency windows, better insulation and energy star electric appliances reduce the amount of electricity required.

Have you thought about what you eat and how much food you are throwing away? The food system accounts for 25% to 35% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Organic waste in landfills decomposes, releasing methane. Solutions: Eat less beef and lamb which have large carbon footprints, compost appropriate food scraps, plant climate "victory" gardens and support efforts to direct useable food to those in need.

Governments play a vital role. In our area, forest management and updating the electric grid will decrease the risk of forest fires. Climate action plans focus on lowering fossil fuel usage. Plans should include environmental justice, tracking and accountability, public transparency, and integrating climate action in all government actions. Our Climate Action Committee is exploring ways to do this locally.

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## Voter Services

by Sue Goldman



Voter Services continues to focus on the redistricting process. One of our goals is to follow up with local cities and school districts to check on their progress with developing and implementing their redistricting processes.

We are also focused on educating local Community Based Organizations (CBOs) regarding redistricting and emphasizing the importance of



getting the populations they work with involved in developing Communities of Interest (COI) at both the local and state levels. *Communities of Interest are overlapping sets of neighborhoods, networks, or groups that share interests, views, cultures, histories, languages, and values, and whose boundaries can be identified on a map.*

A webinar last month in coordination with Common Cause of California gave CBOs an overview of the redistricting process with a focus on local redistricting. Jonathan Mehta Stein, the Executive Director of Common Cause of California and LWVF member Cathy Caples, were the presenters with 50 people attending. The committee members will follow up with the CBO repre-

sentatives to emphasize the importance of this work and to provide resources to assist their communities with developing their COI input.

A number of our members have listened to state redistricting webinars; Judi Steele has monitored all the California Redistricting Commission meetings. She keeps the committee updated on Commission decisions and upcoming dates. The state is holding both state-wide and regional input sessions. Fresno is in Region F and regional meetings will be held July 12, August 4 and August 29. However, people from other areas of the state can also give input on those days.

There will be 100 slots of three minutes each allotted to each day. Registration for those time slots will most likely be two weeks prior on the state website listed below. There will be time allotted for some individuals who did not sign up to be able to give input.

You can also provide input on the state website: [wedrawthelines.org](http://wedrawthelines.org). This website has recordings of Commission meetings, webinars and resource materials. There is a COI input form as well as a mapping tool. Common Cause has a myriad of resources at: [Commoncause.org/redistricting2020/](http://Commoncause.org/redistricting2020/).

## EV transportation to be featured on Zoom

To reduce carbon emissions, the most important step is to switch to an electric vehicle. The LWVC together with Drive Clean California will co-host Drive Clean with the League, a one-hour Zoom event during which experts from Drive Clean



California, electric vehicle drivers and climate and clean air enthusiasts will increase awareness of the benefits of electric (EV) driving.’

The sessions will be repeated on July 10 and 14 and October 16 and 20. EV experts and owners will share experiences, the latest trends, vehicles costs and considerations when moving to electric. They will discuss government incentives, solutions for residents who live in apartments and additional financial incentives for disadvantaged communities.

Attendees who are California residents will receive priority placement for Drive Clean’s next EV Discount Program in November,

Invite everyone you know. Just sign up and share through email or post on social media. For more information and to register, Google “Drive Clean with the League.”

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## Voter's Choice committee schedules meeting series



**Registrar James A. Kus**

The County registrar of Voters is announcing the re-start of the Fresno County Voter's Choice Act Advisory Committee. The Voter's Choice Act Advisory Committee is an opportunity for inter-

ested members of the community to

provide input on how the Act is implemented in Fresno County. This year's meetings will be focused on a general amendment and update of the Fresno County Election Administration Plan requiring community feedback on a wide range of Voter's Choice Act topics.

Meetings are currently planned for the third Wednesday of each month, but those dates might be adjusted after participant feedback from the first meetings on July 21. Each meeting will be held twice, once at 4:00 p.m. and then again at 5:30 p.m. The 5:30 meeting will have online access options.

Each in-person meeting will be held at the Election Warehouse Training room, 4525 E Hamilton Ave, Fresno. Additional community-based meetings will be held in the fall throughout the Fresno County.

Voter's Choice Act Advisory Committee meetings work best when there is a large turnout of interested and varied community voices. Along with asking others to "Save the Date" for the July 21 meeting, please forward this information to friends, colleagues, and associates that are invested in how elections will be conducted in Fresno County. An agenda and connectivity information will be distributed publicly on July 6.

If you have any questions contact Registrar of Voters James A. Kus at 559- 600-1730.

## Water News

by Diane Merrill



LWVC is supporting two pieces of legislation of interest to its Water Committee members and others.

Senate Bill 222 would establish the Water Rate Assistance Fund in the State Treasury and create a Water Rate Assistance Program to help provide water rate assistance for both water and wastewater services to low-income rate-payers experiencing economic hardships. SB 222 is also

supported by a coalition of environmental and social justice organizations concerned about the provision of safe and affordable water and sanitation for thousands of low-income Californians who had trouble paying their water and sewer bills even before Covid 19 struck. Many of these households are in the San Joaquin Valley. This bill has advanced to the California Assembly.



Assembly Bill 252 would establish a multibenefit land repurposing program to help farmers, residents, and the environment in regions where land will have to be fallowed to comply with the requirements of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Much of the land that is likely to be fallowed is in the San Joaquin Valley.

A major concern is that, without planning, farmland will be taken out of production in a patchwork manner resulting in invasive weeds, pests, and dust between fallowed land and active farms. This would reduce the viability of neighboring farms and impair air quality for farms and communities in the area. Special consideration for incentive funding would be given to small farms and ranches and to disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. Environmental benefits could include restoring floodplains, establishing wildlife corridors and maintaining habitat, improving soil health and cover cropping to conserve water and enhance carbon sequestration.

This bill is supported by the Food, Soils, and Agriculture Team of the LWVC Climate Change Task Force and is now in the California Assembly.



**T**his report revives two threads from previous columns.

First, in writing my January column I started with a strong bias to debunk the widespread fears that the covid virus was rapidly mutating in ways that would dramatically increase its transmissibility and lethality. I cited its slow mutation rate compared to influenza. I summarized the views of virologists who believed that evolutionary forces could not drive markedly increased transmissibility or increased lethality. Even as vaccinations started, fears emerged that the mutated virus might become resistant to vaccine-induced antibodies. I outlined some excessively technical aspects about the diversity of vaccine-induced antibodies to support confidence in the sustained effectiveness of vaccinations.

I was wrong about mutation rates. The built-in mutation rate of a virus can be dramatically accelerated by sustained, rapid reproduction. This is yet another reason why it is important to contain contagious outbreaks quickly. Even with little evolutionary drive, rapidly spreading viruses can improve their infectivity, at least modestly. Covid likely did become more transmissible, but not in the way that measles and smallpox could ride through the air on dust particles. Masking and distancing still help contain the spread and are still important for preventing covid in a mostly unvaccinated world.

Overall, I was right. Vaccinations have been dramatically effective but have been slowed by an alarming level of vaccine resistance, as I predicted. The advances in vaccine technology—demonstrating speed, efficacy, and safety—may extend cultural acceptance of vaccination in general, but in any event foreshadow a future of vastly improved epidemic preparedness.



Second, in my June column I recommended that we fund our FDA (still operating with its ancient, New Deal era mission) to function in part like a health economics and outcomes agency, declining to approve medications that provide no cost or clinical advantages over existing agents. This week the FDA did exactly the opposite, approving aducanumab (Aduhelm) on an accelerated approval pathway to treat Alzheimer's disease.

None of the 12 members of the FDA's Neurology Advisory Council voted for approval. Three resigned over the disregard demonstrated by the FDA executives. The agent will cost \$56,000 yearly and require brain MRI's at least every six months to detect the adverse effect of brain swelling. The government-funded, highly respected Institute for Clinical and Economic Review (ICER) performed a detailed study of the value of Aduhelm. Based on data from several clinical trials, ICER determined that the value of Aduhelm to early-phase Alzheimer patients ranged between \$2500 to \$8300 per year in terms of quality of life years. When compared with the average cost of treating an Alzheimer patient of at least \$180,00 per year, this value seems negligible.

However, FDA did not limit its approval to early-phase patients, so that the drug will be available to patients for whom there is no proof of benefit. In essence, the FDA is conducting a poorly designed research study paid for by both private and governmental health plans. The cost could reach 112 billion dollars annually at a critical point in American healthcare. We need both cultural and structural changes in our higgledy-piggledy healthcare system, starting with a budget and a redefinition of our drug approval process.

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*Editor's Note: Joan Lipton's name was inadvertently omitted from the list of past presidents who were honored at our Annual Meeting. Joan was president of LWVF from 1995-1997.*

## Secretary of State calls for revision of state recall process



Dr. Shirley Weber, California's new Secretary of State, spoke to delegates at the opening of the LWVC Convention. Weber invited LWVC collaboration on revising the recall process.

First, she noted the recall process needs to be rewritten as the law currently requires signatures from only 12% of voters to initiate a recall. Also, whoever receives a majority of votes will win, so that a candidate in a crowded field could win with a very small number of votes.

Second, limitations on timing of a recall are needed so that it does not begin close to a scheduled election. Set close to an election, it could become a form of intimidation and drain resources, since it is a very expensive process. *Recent information in the Fresno Bee indicated that the recall election for Gov. Newsom, still to be scheduled, will cost Fresno County close to \$4 million.*

Weber also suggested that justification for a recall might best be limited to commission of a crime and that impeachment proceedings might be an alternative to costly recalls.

Weber expressed appreciation for the League's continued support of HR 1, the For the People Act of 2021, which will safeguard and expand voter access, which has recently moved to the Senate. Weber thanked the League for its work to promote Prop. 17, which restores voting rights to those on parole.

Other goals of the new Secretary of State had to do with education and advocacy. "We must expand the franchise of voting to every Californian," Weber said. Her office will be publishing new material on voter education to be distributed to schools and the public.

*This article is reprinted in part from the newsletter of the LWV of Berkeley, Albany and Emeryville.*

## Convention selects priorities, votes for officers, directors

The State League Convention voted on issues and priorities for the coming biennium. It was decided that there would be no update or new studies and that positions on all issues would remain in place. Issues for priority include the following:

- ◆ **Making democracy work, plus an emphasis on civics education**
- ◆ **Climate Change and sustainability, plus an emphasis on water**
- ◆ **Housing and Homelessness**
- ◆ **Criminal Justice Reform**

**LWVC also elected a slate of officers and directors at the convention.**

Officers: Carol Moon Goldberg, President, Sacramento County

Tracy Edwards, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Cupertino

Gloria Chun Hoo, 2<sup>nd</sup> VP, San Jose

Caroline De Llamas, Secretary, East San Gabriel

Fran Carrillo, Treasurer, San Diego

**Directors:** Maxine Anderson, San Francisco; Debbie Fagan, Pasadena; Cynthia Heard, Los Angeles, Helen Hutchison, Oakland; Adena Ishii, Berkeley; Astrid Ochoa, East San Gabriel; Maya Paley, Los Angeles; Kathleen Quenneville, Piedmont; Shelly Sani, Oakland

**Nominating Committee:**

Carolina Goodman, Los Angeles; Marilyn Guevera Los Angeles; Thanai Lindsay, Los Angeles

## Charter position

*(continued from page 1)*

The League further believes that

- ◆ California standards governing the granting of charters, their renewal and their funding should be periodically reevaluated and amended as necessary;
- ◆ and the calculation of of attendance for independent study and virtual schools should be evaluated to align attendance practices with school district standards.

Committee members included Kay Bertken, Chair; Jacquie Canfield, Francine Farber, Sue Goldman, Janet Ryan (deceased), Amy Schmidt, Trudi Thom, Marsha Wagner, Nyla Zender



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*Men and Women age 16 and above Making Democracy Work*

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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.

**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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