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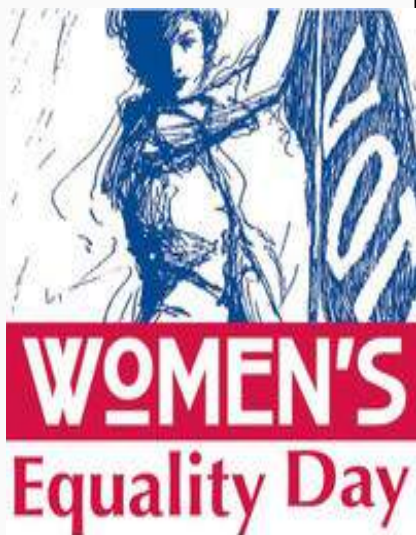
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Monday, July 11
4 p.m. on ZOOM
Regular Board Meeting

July special event
To be announced

Thursday, August 25
5:30 p.m.
Unitarian Universalist Church
Women's Equality Day
Lipton Award
RBG Scholarship Winner



The

FRESNO

VOTER

Our 81st Year!

Chief Balderrama:

“The people are worth it”

by Murray Farber

One day after a U.S. Supreme Court ruling made it easier for Americans to own a gun, Police Chief Juan “Paco” Balderrama visited a meeting of LWVF. It is little more than one year after he was hired to head a Fresno department of 800 officers and hundreds of civilian staffers. For 30 minutes, he revealed his hopes and opinions as well as details about himself. And then for another 30, he answered a barrage of questions from many of the members and guests in the room.

With community safety a special theme, the chief said 3,000 Fresnoans applied last year for gun permits and only a handful were rejected. He arrived from Oklahoma City in 2021 after a year that saw Fresno surpass its record for shootings as well as a 25 year high of murders.

He stressed that he was not involved in politics and acknowledged he could see how fear prompts residents to seek guns. “They have the right to firearms” and cited the Second Amendment but said it should not apply to felons or to persons who are mentally unstable, adding that “90 per cent of homicides involved guns.”

Examining the personality of mass killers, he cited the recent shooting in Buffalo. “His parents lived 200 miles away. He always went on line; had only one friend, was focused on one thing – reading manifestos by other shooters. He became a racist.”



Police Chief
Paco Balderrama

In comparison, he remembered his days as a kid when he sat on the floor with his twin brother, read comic books together, and then went outside to play and had social contacts.

He went on to call himself “everybody’s chief” and cited the department’s need to come up to full staff. “We need a thousand cops; we’re 30 per cent down. I have 57 vacancies; 4 to 12 leave every month. There are 97 training at the police academy and we will be at full staff next year.” His goals include getting out of “the homeless business and the mental health business. Others than the police are better equipped for those areas.”

Referring to himself, the chief said, “The job is harder than I expected with more stress. But the people are worth it.”

Co-President's Message



Watching the Congressional hearings on the January 6 event, we marveled at how millions of people fell for the **Big Lie** that Biden had lost the election. But recently I was involved in an example of how easy it is to convince people of fake information.

A couple of days before a medical appointment, Murray and I decided to scout out a doctor's address to which we had received confusing directions and which did not appear on MapQuest. Not being of the GPS generation, we drove down Fresno Street and onto Divisadero as directed but then couldn't find the street. After driving around the perimeter of the hospital, we stopped at a parking lot where we were told that we had to drive onto the Community Hospital campus to find the street, and then we were successful.

We saw the building numbered 2335 East, but the address on Murray's handwritten instructions was higher than that number. There were no other buildings on that small street. He went into the building to ask directions; he was given a printed map with an arrow showing where it was. We couldn't find that location but an ambulance driver organizing his equipment looked at the map and told us to go back to Fresno Street, turn down Divisadero and make the first right. We found ourselves back where we had started.

Several women walking in the area looked at the map and the address and said it was the first building around the corner. When we drove there, there was no medical building – just a hospital parking lot. Murray asked at the parking lot where a security guard spent at least 10 minutes checking various locations on her hand-held computer. She couldn't find the location. Suddenly Murray realized he had misread the numbers of his own handwriting and that the first building we had found initially was indeed the correct one.

So four people had directed us confidently to a non-existing building because they were approached by a person who showed them a map and an address on paper, convincing them and in turn convincing us that they knew where the building was.

Just like someone telling you convincingly that Biden lost the election!

Francine



From June 2022

Centennial: The 100 Notable Women posters have found a permanent home in the archives of the Fresno Historical Society, thanks to Executive Director Elizabeth Laval. We sent the society a donation of \$100 in thanks for the placement and also for six beautiful books on the history of Fresno County, which will be gifts for League speakers.

Climate Change: The local committee would like us to co-sponsor a Congressional candidate forum on climate change and perhaps other environmental issues. We are asking the committee to provide some more information before we make a decision.

Measure C: We signed onto a Bee ad and an op-ed which highlighted the need for a better process for this somewhat premature measure (it does not expire until 2027) and the inclusion of more public input and greater consideration of public need,

National Convention: Co-president Kay Bertken will be our virtual representative at the convention from June 23-26. No other members took the opportunity to attend.

Mural project: With Centennial funds we are planning to sponsor a mural in a public space to highlight women's rights and voting. A possibility is on the side of the County Clerk-Registrar of Voters office on Kern Street.

Women's Equality Day: We voted on the honoree as well as the Lipton Award and have to verify their availability.

Board Structure: We are looking for members who would like to serve on our board, especially in Program Planning to replace Sandy Williams who passed away this year. We also want to re-start our Student Unit which was on sabbatical during the pandemic. A new faculty advisor is needed. If you would like more information about being a board member please contact kaybertken752@gmail.com or fmfarber@hotmail.com

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

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

Mailing address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710

Volume 81 No. 67 Editor: Francine M. Farber

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



The long-awaited implementation of Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT), also known as Laura's Law, is scheduled to begin August 1. This program will serve individuals who live with mental illness and who are unwilling to accept treatment. Family, friends, or community members may refer individuals to the Department of Behavioral Health, which will screen for eligibility, and then refer to the contracted provider, Turning Point of Central California.

The goal is to engage individuals in community-based mental health treatment, but if individuals refuse, they will be referred to the court, which may order involuntary inpatient treatment. In some California counties where AOT has been implemented, the threat of court involvement has encouraged some patients to voluntarily seek treatment that they had previously refused.

Family Urgent Response System (FURS) is a state mandated program to assist current and former youth in the foster care system with prior or current probation involvement. This is a collaborative state-level phone-based response to crisis situations with the goals of de-escalation, preservation of placement, and avoidance of psychiatric hospitalization. To access FURS a person first calls the State Hotline; if necessary, the State will call for the County mobile response team to respond in-person. DBH collaborates with the Department of Social Services and the Probation Department. This year the Department has received only 14 calls; except for one instance, all situations were successfully stabilized.



At its June meeting the Behavioral Health Board (BHB) held a Public Hearing and voted to support the approval of the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Annual Update & Prevention and Early Intervention Evaluation Report prepared by the Department of Behavioral Health. After the approval of the Board of Supervisors the document will be submitted to the state, so that the Department may access MHSA funds to support its programs.

The Board voted to continue meeting virtually. You are welcome to join the next meet on July 20th via Webex by contacting dominja@fresnocountyca.gov

evansalca@comcast.net

Voter Services

by Sue Goldman



Voter Services has been focused on providing volunteers for the recent election, both for the phone bank and opening ballots. We had almost 50 volunteers between the two. We appreciate people volunteering for two elections so close together. We also appreciate how flexible people were with the ballot opening. Many of the shifts were cancelled yet people continued to sign up.

Volunteers donated over 300 hours for the phone bank and over 220 hours for ballot opening. A number of phone calls expressed continued concerns with (non-existent) voter fraud. Unfortunately, voter turnout was only 28%. Average for non-presidential primaries is 30%. Both are disappointingly low numbers.

While our Saturday brunch for volunteers had a small group of attendees, it was well received and engendered discussion regarding voting in general and possible reasons for the low turnout.



We now have about four months before needing to staff both the phone bank and ballot opening again. We appreciate all who have volunteered in the past and hope you will continue to do so. We are also looking for new volunteers. In addition to providing a civic service, these volunteer hours earn money for the League, which helps us to fund our other endeavors.

The November ballot has the potential for 10 propositions, five of which have qualified so far. These include: sports betting on tribal lands; single-use plastic regulations (cutting single use plastic packaging and foodware sold in the state); overturning the flavored tobacco ban; art and music k-12 funding; and kidney dialysis rule reforms (the third time for this proposition). Pending propositions include: allowing online sports betting; pandemic prevention and detection; wealth tax to support clean air programs; minimum wage increase; and repeal of workplace watchdog laws.

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Health Care

by Richard Bertken, M.D.



Is President Biden's Cancer Moonshot beginning to hit the target?

As Vice President he launched the Moonshot in 2016 with a billion dollars of funding approved by Congress. The program was followed during the Trump administration. One of Biden's early acts as President was to "re-ignite the Moonshot with White House leadership" to reduce the death rate from cancer by at least 50 percent over the next 25 years. We are seeing progress, perhaps inspired by but not necessarily funded by the Moonshot.

What about routine health care?

But can America afford, in the context of our bloated health care system, to integrate expensive new cancer treatments into a medical landscape that is failing to provide adequate *routine* health care?

This month the *New York Times* presented an article entitled *A Cancer Trial's Unexpected Result: Remission in Every Patient*. Eighteen early-stage rectal cancer patients received the new drug dostarlimab for six months instead of the usual chemo and radiation therapy. All eighteen remained in remission with a median follow-up of one year. Cancer experts responded to this study with a mix of amazement, satisfaction, and caution.

Advanced cell engineering techniques have fostered immune cell transplants of high specificity against several blood cancers—leukemia, lymphoma, and myeloma. Known as CAR-T cell therapy, the transplanted immune cells provide enduring, specific immune attack on cancer cells. CAR-T is expensive. The manufactured cells are costly. The associated medications and frequent hospitalizations for acute adverse effects are even more expensive. The total ranges from \$400,000 to \$1.3 million per case.

50% remission rate for blood cancers

Even so, CAR-T cell therapy for several blood cancers was approved by the FDA in 2017. A persuasive argument for CAR-T was its sustained remission rate of 50% in successfully treated patients versus a very grim prognosis for all others. Centers specializing in CAR-T treatment now serve many developed countries.

(continued on page 5)

Climate Change

by Andrea Farber De Zubiria



Water and climate issues are intimately related: as our climate heats up, our drought issues intensify. The energy used to treat and pump water through cities also contributes two to three percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, according to *The Yale Environment Review*.

With this in mind, the Climate Action Committee met with Wendy Cornelius, the Water Conservation Supervisor for the City of Fresno. We learned that the City has a variety of programs to help residents and businesses conserve water and save money. Services include free consultations on irrigation, timers and leak detection. There are also free landscape consultations to help understand what plants would be ideal for your soil type and sun exposure. The landscapers are available to give "timer tutorials" for all customers to help us water more effectively and within Fresno's schedule rules.

There are a number of rebates available to offset some of the costs of installing water-efficient appliances, fixtures and landscaping materials. Examples are smart timers, high efficiency sprinkler nozzles, new toilets (if you remove models from 1992 or earlier), washing machines and front lawn makeovers.

Homeowners and businesses can be awarded \$1/square foot of lawn removed, up to \$1500. To avoid exacerbating "heat islands", water runoff and landfill use, replacement landscape needs to include at least 33% plant coverage, minimal rock and no artificial turf. The city employs landscape designers to help customers plan their new garden. These programs are mostly funded out of our water bills; there are some grants involved as well. Get more information about services and rebates at waterconservation@fresno.gov

The EyeOnWater program allows City of Fresno customers to view their water usage on their desktop computer or mobile device. This helps people understand their water usage and quickly detect the leaks that lead to huge water waste. Sign up at fresno.eyeonwater.com/signup. For simple water conservation tips go to saveourwater.com

afarberdezub@gmail.com

Education

by Kay Bertken



The regular school year is over in Fresno Unified but district schools will be busy all summer. Summer academies have begun, and special interest camps will happen in July.

The School Board's main business in the last meetings of the academic year were the 2022-2023 budget and the Local Control Accountability Plan. The LCAP reflects the district's budgetary responsiveness to community input as it allocates the funding meant for the district's high-risk students. Eighty-eight percent of FUSD students fall into high-risk categories: foster youth, homeless students, English Learners, or children from families below the poverty line. Close to \$250 million of Fresno Unified's \$1.5 billion revenue comes from the supplemental dollars that the State allocates specifically for those students.

Budget and LCAP create discussion



Both the budget and LCAP passed after multiple discussions during the year. Both included big investments in enhanced supports for students—psychologists, social workers and counselors—and recovery programs to make up for learning time lost during the pandemic—expanded after school and summer school offerings plus continuation of the online E-Learn program. For the first time, the District's LCAP included specific target improvements in graduation rates and college and career readiness rates for its foster youth and special education students.

Should there be police officers on campus?

Other significant business included the highly charged issue of returning police officers to middle school campuses. The District had provided partial funding for school/neighborhood resource officers (SROs) at middle schools until the pandemic school closures. The contract ended at that time and had not been renewed. There are currently school resource officers at the high schools but

Next Board Meetings

August 10, August 24

Not at the middle schools. The trustees voted on a new contract with Fresno PD to return SRO's to five middle schools in the fall, five more in the spring of next year, with additional officers added as available. Fresno PD does not currently have the officers necessary to staff all of the schools immediately.

Parents express safety concerns

The contract generated a lot of emotional comment from community members. Support came from parents' desire for enhanced safety measures following the school shooting in Uvalde, Texas. Those opposed voiced concerns over discriminatory police treatment of children of color and the criminalization of student conduct that would ordinarily be handled by school administration.

In recognition of community concerns on both sides, the trustees wanted assurance of extensive screening and training of all candidates for the SRO positions and detailed documentation of SRO/student contacts. Surveys of students and school personnel generally supported the return of SROs but under many of the same conditions that Board members supported. The contract did pass.

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Health Care (continued from page 4)

Dostarlimab is a recent addition to the list of anti-cancer drugs that induce attack on cancer cells by activating immunity. All these agents have carried the risk of inducing unwanted immune reactions against healthy tissues. The dostarlimab treatment used in the *New York Times* report cost \$100,000, modest by cancer treatment standards. If the course needs to be repeated (likely, in the view of cancer experts) or if autoimmune reactions require treatment, the costs will dramatically increase.

If we lived in a country like the 24 countries with national, integrated healthcare systems, we would discover about a trillion dollars wasted in our current system, some of which could be devoted to cancer and other medical research, as well as physical and social infrastructure.

What I am saying is, the cost of American healthcare continues to plague our country, and we should not forget this because we cannot envision legislative action to solve our affliction.

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League rejects Measure C plan, asks for review of process, priorities

The following statement was made in behalf of LWVF by Marianne Kast at the Fresno County Council of Governments on June 30. Note: The meeting was postponed due to technical difficulties.

The League of Women Voters of Fresno opposes this Measure C renewal expenditure plan, and we oppose putting it on the November 2022 ballot.

Following a year-long study and the consensus of our membership, the Fresno League adopted positions on local transportation in 1986. Our positions have been revisited multiple times in those 34 years. However, they remain the foundation for our advocacy on local transportation.

We advocate incentives to promote the use of public transit and local funding measures sufficient to support local transit. In addition, the League holds national positions on addressing climate change and protecting air quality. This expenditure plan does not adequately fund alternative transportation or public transit, and it does not commit to addressing serious concerns for climate resiliency and improving air quality.

We also hold strong policy positions for public involvement in transportation planning. The League feels that the planning for this renewal of Measure C has NOT been a good example of public process. The Technical Working Group and the executive committee have been heavily populated by government staff and elected officials. The expenditure plan outlines were written in advance and presented by staff. Discussion by the committees was delayed for

over a year while staff and consultants presented transportation information and statistics to the committees in agendas set by staff.

Attempts to discuss transportation policy, equity, and environmental impacts were shut down in the “interest of time”. Questions, suggestions, objections raised by the committees were omitted from minutes, so that there is no record of the attempt to participate in the meetings. Information garnered by public open houses and surveys was not made available for the working group until their meetings were almost concluded. This has not been a genuine public process.

By contrast, the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for Fresno County as mandated by the federal government and developed by Council of Governments has been a full throated public process resulting in the highest priority strategies for implementing the RTP including bus transportation and ride sharing options, improving access and connections between cities and towns, and increasing climate resiliency, improving air quality, improving economic, environmental and public health in disadvantaged communities.

There is a glaring mismatch between the weight of the allocations proposed in this draft expenditure plan and our region’s values as expressed in the RTP and the local commitment to implementing our RTP.

We cannot support the draft expenditure plan because it does not meet our policies for funding local transportation, and because the expenditure plan does not adequately support

Fresno County’s strategies for Sustainable Communities (SCS).

We strongly believe that this mismatch between planning for local transportation and its impacts on our environment have come about because planning a Measure C renewal did not start from a community discussion among the consumers of the transportation system but was, instead, offered by staff for the approval of your member agencies.

An effort in 2002 failed to craft a Measure C renewal by the COG and the Chamber of Commerce. The proposal was not developed in a public process, and the chamber and COG dismissed community concerns about the relationship of our motor vehicle emissions and the quality of air in our Valley. Advocates for public health and alternative modes of transportation opposed that ballot proposition, and it failed to garner the two-thirds vote necessary to pass a tax measure.

A year later supervisors Susan Anderson and Juan Arambula brought together county stake holders who agreed that we all wanted a renewal of tax, but differed only on its expenditures. A diverse task force of community interests met under the guidance of a neutral professional facilitator, with a staff of transportation planners and public works employees as support.


We urge your board to reject this expenditure plan and direct the Transportation Authority to convene a public task force to develop a plan owned by the community and supportive of the values in the RTP and the SCS.

--Mary Savala
rudysavala@comcast.net

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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.**

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