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my.lwv.org/California/fresno

The *Fresno*

VOTER



Monday, June 10, 5 p.m.
Regular Board Meeting
League Office

Friday, July 12, 9 a.m.
Board Retreat
707 W. Fairmont, Fresno
Details TBA
All welcome

Monday, August 26
Women's Equality Day
Celebration—Reception
Details TBA

MEMBERS AND GUESTS
WELCOME
TO ALL
LEAGUE MEETINGS
AND EVENTS



Janz speaks at 78th Annual Meeting

by Liz Shields

A crowded luncheon gathering at Stone Soup heard keynote speaker Andrew Janz talk about his Voter Protection Project at the League's Annual Meeting on April 27. May Also at the meeting, community activist Ruth Gadebusch was honored with the Werner Lipton Award.

This was Janz' first speaking engagement since the November election when he was narrowly defeated by Congressman Devin Nunes. In his non-partisan talk he expressed his belief in the power of women to create a better democracy.

Janz said the impetus for the creation of the Voter Protection Project was based on events that occurred around the November election. These included the nullification of the election for the 9th Congressional District in North Carolina, the conflict of interest caused by the Secretary of State in Georgia not recusing himself from the vote process in Georgia where he was on the ballot, the purging of voter rolls in Ohio, and mishandling of votes in Broward County, Florida. He believes voter suppression tactics were used by both parties, including partisan gerrymandering of congressional and state districts in Michigan and Pennsylvania. These and other events have lead to voter disenchantment and questioning of the integrity of the voting process.

The beginning stage of the Voter Protection Project involved fund raising, with close to \$250,000 raised already. Going forward the project will target five battleground states with strong ballot initiative histories: Colorado, Florida, Missouri , Ohio and Nevada. It will assist in running ballot initiatives to strengthen voter rights. It will also support candidates who wish to expand voting rights and aim to defeat elected officials that vote against ballot access. It will be contacting people in the five states and using radio and TV spots to spread the word.

Janz responded to a number of audience questions.

- ◆ the project has no staff but himself and operates communications remotely.
- ◆ voter fraud is not prosecuted because of reluctance by the judiciary to do so.

(continued on page 3)

President's Message



At our Annual Meeting Andrew Janz spoke about creating the Voter Protection Project. This is an initiative, focused on battleground states, that aims to increase voter access to voting and to oppose candidates who endorse restrictive voting requirements. While measures like convenient and same-day registration, early in-person voting, wider access to vote-by-mail ballots, and increased civics education do increase voter turnout, the results of some elections are nearly predetermined because of unfair districting.

In 2008, Californians passed the Voters FIRST Act, a combined constitutional amendment and statute, which addressed the issue of partisan districting by taking the task away from the state legislature. This initiative created the first 14-member Citizens Redistricting Commission. This Commission was tasked with drawing the boundaries for State Assembly, State Senate, and State Board of Equalization districts. In 2010 the additional job of determining California's congressional districts was also given to the Commission.

California's first commissioners served for 10 years, and now it is time to select a new group. While the term seems long, the majority of work will be conducted after the completion of the 2020 census. Applications for new commissioners are being accepted from June 10 through August 9, 2019. In 2010, about 30,000 applications were received, but a significant portion of the selection process is by lottery. It would be monumental to have a Fresno League member serving on the Commission. Check out the details at *Shape California's Future*.

Even if there is not a League member on the new California redistricting Commission, LWV Fresno will have an active part in our County's transition to Voter's Choice Act voting. Information on the planned improvements is on page 5 in this issue of the Voter. We have always been a part of voter education in our County, and this change in access to voting will require our best efforts and those of many other organizations in order to be successful. The potential for increase in voter turnout is huge, but change is difficult.

Here are two ways you can influence the outcome of elections. I challenge you to tackle one of these tasks.

- *Marianne*

MEMBER NEWS

Please edit your roster



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

Checks should be sent to

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Thank you

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BREAKING NEWS (JUST LIKE CNN)

In 2011 LWVF requested a writ of mandate regarding the Friant Ranch lawsuit. Recently California Superior Court wrote:



"It is hereby ordered that promptly upon service of this writ, the County of Fresno, shall: Vacate and 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."

The court also awarded court costs to appellants Sierra Club, League of Women Voters and Revive the San Joaquin.

Janz

(continued from page 1)

- ◆ there is a need to identify members of Congress who are willing to strengthen the Voting Right Law gutted by the Supreme Court
- ◆ he is opposed to the inclusion of the citizenship question on 2020 census
- ◆ we are currently dependent on the Federal Elections Commission to respond to fraudulent or unethical activity
- ◆ California Citizens Commission on Redistricting is a move in the right direction but could have done a better job at keeping communities with similar issues in the same state and Congressional districts.
- ◆

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



The Behavioral Health Board conducted a public hearing in May on the Mental Health Services Act Annual Update. Every three years the Department of Behavioral Health writes a new plan; the years in-between, the Department is required to present an update to that plan based on stakeholders' input.

The Board hosts the Public Hearing so the Department can share public comments and concerns; members of the public are encouraged to participate in the final phase before the plan goes to the Board of Supervisors, and then on to the state level. The Department reported that there were few changes to the plan this year because programs approved last year have not been implemented, primarily due to lack of staff; the Department hopes to begin those new programs this year. The Board voted to recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve the plan, so that it can be forwarded to the state.

At the regular monthly meeting the manager from the Fresno County Purchasing Department gave a presentation about the selection of contracted providers of services through the Request for Proposals (RFP) process. Board members often are invited to sit on review panels to select vendors to provide behavioral health services. The responsibilities of sitting on these panels were explained, so that members would understand the commitment and expectations when agreeing to serve. Board members can provide a unique perspective, so it is important that they participate in the process.

The Department's First Street Center was reviewed. It provides outpatient and Full Service Partnership wrap-around services for individuals who have been in prison or jail who are under post-release community supervision. These individuals are referred by the Fresno County Probation Department. Goals are to support reintegration into the community and to prevent recidivism by providing whatever services individuals need to be successful, including treatment for co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders, housing, employment, and connection to family and community supports. This highly successful program is recognized as a model for similar programs throughout the state.

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OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2019-2020

Reports from committees you can join

CLIMATE CHANGE

Citizens' Climate Lobby Fresno is initiating a "Dialing Congress Campaign" to let local representatives know that their constituents want bipartisan action and innovation to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Sign up to make one call a month to your member of Congress at this site: ***Dialing Congress Campaign, Central Valley***. You'll receive a monthly reminder and talking points related to climate change and the Energy Innovation and Climate Dividend Act. We are studying resources in the League Climate Change toolkit, with plans to share a resources list and possibly produce an educational panel on climate change this fall.

A number of presidential candidates are talking about climate change on the campaign trail, specifically about putting a price on carbon. The bi-partisan Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act puts a gradually increasing price on carbon, with the fee returned to all American households as a "rebate".

Local representatives Jim Costa and TJ Cox signed on to a bill which would direct the President to develop a plan to meet our nationally determined contribution under the Paris Climate Agreement..

Next Meeting: June 5, 4:30—6 p.m.

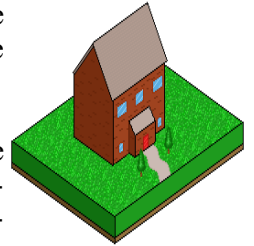
4860 North Teilman, Fresno

Co-Chairs: Andrea Farber De Zubiria/Connie Young
afarberdezub@gmail.com/cyoungrn@sbcglobal.net



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Members of the Affordable Housing Committee are attending workshops that explore lower cost alternatives to house those in need.



The first meeting focused on the East Portland Community Investment Trust. It has enabled individuals or families to participate who live in the four zip codes around the real estate chosen for investment. Low-income investors qualified for the loan, paying what they could afford rather than being turned down using banks' regular method of financing.

To be accepted into the program, potential investors were required to complete a two-day course called "Moving From Owning to Owning". The participating residents chose real estate from a list of possibilities as their investment, with the requirement that it had to be near schools, grocery stores and other amenities.

An additional benefit of this project is that tenants renting space in the investment property are representative of many nationalities and cultures, all of whom live together peacefully. The project has been profitable and the number of investors is growing.

Next Meeting: To be announced

Chair: Nyla Zender: nylajz@comcast.net

EARLY CARE

AND EDUCATION

As you read this we are presenting our recommendations to become an official position on charter schools at the state convention, which we hope will be approved by the LWVC membership. Meanwhile our committee is gathering data on early education availability in Fresno.



Next Meeting: June 21, 4 p.m.

4 752 E. Buckingham, Fresno
Kay Bertken: kayb@csufresno.edu

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Voter Services

by Liz Shields



County Elections Clerk Brandi Orth hosted the second meeting of the Elections Advisory Committee (EAC) to discuss progress for adoption of the Voter Choice Act Model to be used in 2020 elections. Among the 40 attendees were disability advocates, representatives of ethnic communities, political parties, community organizations and elected representatives.

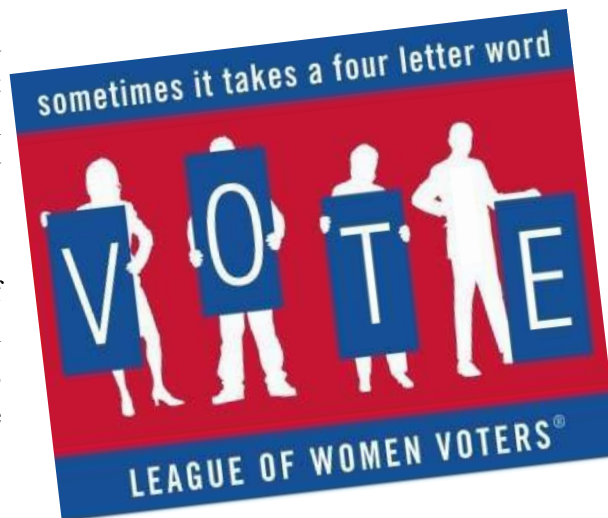
The Board of Supervisors approved purchase of new voting equipment costing approximately \$2.8 million funded by state and federal money with no net cost to Fresno County. A flyer to be used for voter education and an unofficial draft copy of the Elections Administration Plan to be submitted to the supervisors for approval by September were distributed. Attendees were encouraged to forward all comments to Cindy Lee at cllee@co.fresno.ca.us

The Voter Accessibility Advisory Committee and Language Accessibility Advisory Committee will meet monthly to discuss how to transition to the new system. The advisory committee will meet on the third Wednesday of each month at the Elections Warehouse. Community organizations are encouraged to send participants. The next meeting will be June 19th.

The Secretary of State has to approve our Voter Education and Outreach Plan and will comment on the Vote Center Model presented in the plan before these are implemented. The draft plan contains the history of voting in Fresno County from the earliest hand tallied paper ballots to the current paper scan voting system. A brief description of the planned Voter Center Model indicates there

will be at least 10 centers open 11 days before an election and an additional 46 open for 4 days including weekends.

The Voter Education and Outreach Plans include use of social media, newspapers, radio and television as well as voter education workshops presented by community organizations with assistance from the Elections Department. Direct contact with voters will be made through voter mailings informing them of the upcoming elections and toll-free voter assistance hotline, as well as postcards to request ballots in languages other than English. Currently Fresno County has to provide voting materials and assistance in seven languages other than English and Spanish.



The Vote Center Model includes information on vote-by-mail ballots sent to each registered voter in Fresno County to be returned by mail postage free, dropped in an official Drop Box or at a Vote Center. Remote accessible ballots may be requested by voters with disabilities who can then

mark the ballot, print it and return it like a regular vote-by-mail ballot. Or voters may request a replacement ballot by phone, by faxing a request to the Elections Office or by coming to a Vote Center or the Elections Office.

Voter Centers and Drop Boxes will be located in Fresno, Clovis and all thirteen outlying incorporated cities in Fresno County. Possible location of these Centers was determined by looking at variables such as proximity to population centers, communities with low vote-by-mail usage, and access to public transportation. Maps detailing these criteria and a Weighted Overall Map may be accessed at <https://www.co.fresno.ca.us/departments/county-clerk-registrar-of-voters/voters-choice-act-3528>

elizs44@yahoo.com



lion in additional ongoing funding to support new teachers, paraprofessionals and instructional coaches (to be phased in) and additional

A much-anticipated budget presentation for special education at a recent Fresno Unified Board meeting was preceded by speakers from the audience including several special education teachers and Darius Assemi. They had complaints about the process leading to the budget recommendations, aimed specifically at the special education management team and director Brian Beck.

The speakers claimed that they were not part of the budget making process, nor was the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). They called for a change in leadership in the department. Their concerns included the fact that there is no physical therapist on staff; currently those services are contracted out, and the budget includes increasing the hours of service under that contract.

There needs to be preparation and training to facilitate plans for increased inclusion of special ed students in mainstream classes; the current relationship with the CAC is not good. Complaints continued during the open communication section of the agenda. The objective was to have the board recognize the alleged inadequacies of the top-down process and to reject the budget proposal by the special education leadership team.

The special ed budget proposal, which includes special education, psychological services and health, did call for a big increase in funding. For special education, the request is for \$10.2 mil-

lion in additional ongoing funding to support new teachers, paraprofessionals and instructional coaches (to be phased in) and additional one-time funding for facilities. This equates to almost 106 full time positions.

Under Psychological Services, the request was for five new positions for increased support at middle schools and alternative education sites. Health Services is asking for two new school nurses and one health services manager. The district is moving toward all schools having an RN or LVN replacing all current healthcare aides.

In a separate budget proposal, the College and Career guidance program requested five new counselling positions to reduce and equalize case loads at the school sites.

The Governor's May revision of the state budget includes a statewide increase of \$119 million in special education funding and one time funding for loans targeting newly credentialed teachers in hard to fill subject areas. It also increases school facilities funding by \$150 million statewide to facilitate construction and/or retrofits for full day kindergarten use.

Beyond budgetary items, the Board heard presentations on the status of solar projects, the planned new Juan Filipe Herrera Elementary School, and the computer tablet initiative. Many of the parking area solar shade structures are in or being built. Installations at the Brawley Service Center and the Adult School are pending. Three of the pro-

jects are targeted to be producing energy soon. The remaining ones are in limbo, awaiting interconnection studies and connection upgrades required by PGE. The District's solar partners and the Board expressed dissatisfaction with the long delays, attributed in part to PGE's bankruptcy filing.

Given the Board's lack of clear direction in their recent facilities priority setting meeting, nevertheless planning is continuing for the Herrera Elementary School. Architectural plans for the campus include possible soccer fields that could be available for community use and a health center.

Trustee Mills voiced opposition to those options indicating the City should be providing park and recreational space and that Adams Elementary should have first priority for a health facility given a previous study of health needs. She also referred to the agreement with Clinica Sierra Vista and Valley Children's Hospital that was proposed by them to build and staff health facilities on FUSD campuses.

The District's eLearning Companion Device Initiative has put computer tablets in the hands of 14,500 students. The tablets are preloaded with learning applications and a content filter. The district has documented more than 100,000 hours of use of the top six applications. The tablets are the property of the district, and are loaned to the students for three years. After three years from the date issued, the tablet becomes the property of the student.

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DIVERSITY POLICY: There shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the LWVF on the basis of race, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or socio-economic level.

What do you get when you join the League? All for one fee, you become a member of the Fresno, California and National Leagues and receive their newsletters. You may participate in League studies of issues; receive leadership training; hone your public speaking skills; become knowledgeable about local and state issues; learn more about government, natural resources and social policies as your time and interests dictate. You will also meet some interesting and friendly women and men who represent diverse backgrounds but find common ground in keeping abreast of current issues.

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