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June 11 –13

LWVC Convention

Virtual on ZOOM

\$25 to participate

see page 3

June 14

Regular BOARD Meeting

9 a.m. outdoors

Home of Francine Farber. CALL if you would like to attend 226-5455

The

Our 80th Year!

FRESNO

VOTER

Evictions, mental health issues, domestic violence frequently lead to homelessness

by Francine M. Farber

Fresno's eviction rate is at a higher percentage than that of San Francisco or Los Angeles, numbering between three and four thousand "official" evictions a year and perhaps as many as double that number informally. This occurs when people who are undocumented or have no resources to fight against illegal evictions just pack up and leave their homes.

About three dozen members and guests attended our virtual meeting on Understanding Homelessness last month with presentations from panelists Dawan Utecht, Director of the Fresno County's Department of Behavioral Health, Nicole Linder, Executive Director of the Marjaree Mason Center, and Dr Amber Crowell, Associate Professor of Sociology at Fresno State.

Dr. Crowell noted that despite Fresno's relatively lower rents compared with the Bay area, many Fresnoans are "rent burdened" because rather than spending about 30% of their income for rent, they are spending up to 50%. Unpaid rent is the reason for the greatest numbers of evictions. And with Fresno needing about 40,000 more units to fulfill its housing needs, evictions are one of the primary reasons for an individual or family to end up homeless.

An easy way for a woman to become homeless is to call the police about a domestic violence issue. Neighbors or the landlord file a nuisance complaint against her leading to a rationale for eviction, so in effect she gets punished for asking for help. In New York and Cleveland where attorneys have been assigned to represent evicted tenants, 90% of individuals have been able to keep their homes, even as easily as through rent negotiations.

Director Utecht noted that her involvement in housing issues from management to development to funding has grown since she took her job about 8 years ago. Mental health issues, she says, cause some tenants to be considered on the lowest rung of the housing ladder. Whether they are aging out of foster care at 18 and have no place to go, or have just been released from the criminal justice system, there are not enough resources to deal with their complex issues. We have to have a plan, she insists, in order to prevent these individuals from finding themselves without a place to live. She noted that helping them get into permanent supportive housing should come first before demanding that they be involved in services. They are more likely to engage in these services after they are in housing.

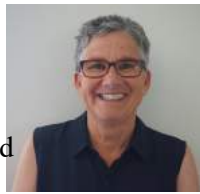
Out of the ten largest cities in California, Fresno has the highest per capita rate of calls for domestic violence, said Nicole Linder. Because of privacy laws there can be a barrier to obtain-

(continued on page 7)



June 20

President's Message



I often walk around Fresno. I enjoy seeing the world at a slower speed and have found that I can run errands efficiently, sometimes more quickly than when driving my car. But Fresno is not a particularly safe place to travel on foot.

I was grazed by a car several months ago while walking. Since then I've paid particular attention to pedestrian accidents in our city, and there have been many. Most pedestrian vs. automobile accidents result in death to the pedestrian. How can cities make pedestrian travel safer?

A recent report by *Smart Growth America* indicates that the number of people struck and killed nationwide while walking increased 45% during the years 2010-2019. About 14 pedestrians per day have been killed while walking over the past decade, with many thousands more injured. Smart Growth, which advocates for urban development that fosters safe, equitable, and sustainable community growth, blames poor roadway design and the increasing popularity of SUVs and other large vehicles for the deadly increase.

Among the street design modifications that slow traffic are narrower travel lanes, high visibility crosswalks, decreasing the distance between intersections, and eliminating right turn "slip" lanes in favor of right-angle turns to slow down turn speeds and create shorter crossing distances for pedestrians. In Fresno, I would also recommend raising signal lights that block drivers' view of pedestrians as they traverse across divided streets.

The increased size and weight of vehicles directly contributes to deaths of pedestrians and also sets drivers up to make devastating mistakes that would be less so in smaller vehicles. SUVs outsold sedans two-to-one in 2019 and by 2025, the light-truck segment of sales (SUVs, vans and pick-up trucks) is predicted to make up 78% of all auto sales. The National Transportation Safety Administration recommended revising motor vehicle safety standards in 2018 to better protect pedestrians, but federal policymakers failed to enact those changes.

Cities have prioritized the fast movement of vehicles on streets over safety for people who walk, use wheelchairs or scooters to travel. During the early stages of the Covid-19 lockdowns, driving declined significantly as people followed stay-at-home orders, but with fewer cars on the road, speeding went up. The National Traffic Safety Council estimates a 24% increase in traffic fatality rates during the early months of 2020 even though miles driven declined 13%. It's a crazy thought, but we could look at congestion and delay on city roads as crucial to preventing many more traffic fatalities.

Marianne



Generous donations to the RBG Scholarship fund were made last month by:

John and Maureen Hayes

Olga Quercia

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ALICE POWELL

Alice Powell, a member of our League for almost 40 years, passed away on May 11 at the age of 89. Alice enjoyed being the League parliamentarian. In that capacity she read out the rules of order at our Annual Meetings for as long as anyone can remember. Before she married Dr. Frank Powell, also our member now deceased, Alice was the Dean of Women at Fresno State, a position no longer in vogue.

She is remembered most fondly as a smart, informed, cheerful woman who never complained about her complicated medical situation and cared deeply about others.

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.

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Volume 80, No. 6 Editor: Francine M. Farber

Education

by Kay Bertken



We have joined with representatives of four other leagues to discuss an affiliation in support of Early Childhood Care and Education—Los Altos, San Diego, Palo Alto, and an East Bay representative. The ambitions of the group include expanding member knowledge of Early Childhood care and education, encouraging elected officials and candidates for office to prioritize early education, augmenting our advocacy by joining with other ECE coalitions and forming a taskforce to analyze proposed legislative bills related to early childhood. Currently we are sharing our experiences advocating for early childhood uses for the funds coming into school districts from the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) and from our own state surplus.

Budget windfall arriving

Fresno Unified is on target to receive more than \$700 million, a huge windfall for a district with an annual budget of just over a billion dollars. Current district proposals for the 2021-2022 budget year have allocated short of \$100 million of the one-time funds, most of which were proposed prior to the ARP distributions and the Governor's May revision of the state budget. The proposed expenditures target expanded summer programs and tutoring services to compensate for learning loss during the last year, teacher training, and work on ventilation systems and classroom equipment.



We have met with representatives of the district to determine the most pressing early childhood needs and what the opportunities might be. Limitations imposed by one time funding with time limits on their expenditure will provide challenges to all school systems to thoughtfully plan for this new funding.

Advocates crowd the meetings

Board meetings over the last months have been crowded with vocal community members advocating for a return to full time face-to-face instruction and Fresno High alumni wanting the trustees to rescind their determination to change the Warrior mascot image. Members of that group are currently suing the district over the issue. The Trustees delayed consideration of an item that would approve expenditures for changing the FHS logo from its recent agenda pending further community discussion.

Naming for new campus

Also at its recent meeting, the trustees voted to name the new Ventura and 10th campus after Francine and Murray Farber who have initiated and shepherded multiple programs benefitting the school district and the students of Fresno. Various buildings on that campus will be named after other noteworthy nominees at a subsequent meeting.

Civic engagement seal underway

The Civic Education Partnership and its non-profit action arm, the Civic Education Center (CEC), continue to work on preparing teachers and school districts to implement the California Seal of Civic Engagement—a seal affixed to a high school diploma acknowledging community service and civic engagement. The seal is one of many national initiatives recognizing the need to re-imagine and emphasize civics education. Fresno has been engaged in the effort for years, providing training to students in civil dialogue and engagement in community issues.

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STATE CONVENTION IS HERE

You can be a voting delegate to our state LWVC convention on Zoom from June 11 through June 13. There are two spots still available and the \$75 registration fee will be paid by our League. Your job will be to attend meetings, caucuses and other league events; take responsibility for voting; and report back to membership along with the other delegates.

If you are interested in being a voting delegate please contact Marianne at once fourkasts@gmail.com You can also register as a non-voting participant, which requires a flat fee of \$25.

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



Department of Behavioral Health Access Line answered 24/7 by a local provider 800-654-3937

Behavioral Health Board members participated in a site visit to the Living Well Center that primarily serves members of the Southeast Asian community. Depending on the needs of clients, the program provides three levels of care—Outpatient, Intensive Case Management, and Full Service Partnership (for the most seriously ill). Services are available for Southeast Asian children, adults, and older adults who are eligible for MediCal. The contract is for 250 individuals, but currently the program is serving 285 clients in these areas despite COVID restrictions, and the limited psychiatric hours that are available. Having a staff that understands the cultures, languages, concerns, and issues of the communities that they serve, is extremely helpful in building trust and engaging clients in behavioral health services.

The Board has four subcommittees that receive in-depth information about programs. The **Adult Services Committee** meets the first Monday of most months at 10 a.m. This committee has focused on housing and vocational opportunities for clients of the Department. The **Children's Services Committee** meets bi-monthly on the fourth Thursday at 9 a.m.; it is a joint committee with the Foster Care Standards and Oversight Committee, and looks at behavioral health services for all children in our county. The **Forensics Committee** looks at services for those individuals who become involved in the criminal justice system as a result of their behavioral health conditions, and receives regular reports from health care providers in the jail and at Juvenile Justice Center; the committee meets bi-monthly on the second Monday at 1:30 p.m. The **Substance Use Disorders Committee** meets quarterly on the second Thursday at 10 a.m. to discuss services for individuals with substance use disorders and/or co-occurring diagnoses. To be added to the distribution list for any of these committees, contact Jeannette Dominguez at dominja@fresnocountyca.gov

evanscalca@comcast.net

Climate Change

by Lenore Yousef



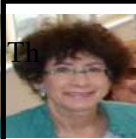
The secret about what is happening in neglected parts of Fresno is slowly getting out. Transform Fresno is upgrading southwest Fresno, Chinatown and the downtown area by investing in projects to combat climate change, to give residents economic opportunities and to improve health.

This historically inclusive project involved the residents who live in the target neighborhoods in planning the improvements. The residents helped choose the 24 projects that led to a \$66.6 million grant award from California's cap-and-trade program. Matching funds of \$122 million came from various local partners. Allocation of the funds reflects community priorities: urban greening, including community gardens, tree planting, parks and trails got almost \$106 million, followed by affordable housing and sustainable communities (almost \$39 million), low carbon transportation (\$10 million), and low income weatherization (almost \$7 million). Job training includes solar panel installation, welding, and driving zero-emission trucks. **A satellite campus of Fresno City College is under construction to bring educational opportunities into the area.**

Annual reports generated from data collected from the various projects will be posted on the Transform Fresno website. A "displacement avoidance" plan is being developed which aims to head off displacement of the current residents and businesses. Once the policy is completed, residents will be able to provide feedback. Planned workshops and presentations on home ownership and business development will aid in keeping residents in the area.

Transform Fresno is looked to as a leader in community development; the two other cities-Watts and Ontario- were awarded only half the amount that Fresno received. The comprehensiveness of the Fresno projects to aid neglected communities may serve as a template for the future projects.

lenorey@csufresno.edu



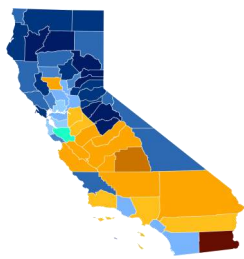
Sue Goldman

Voter Services



Janice Maroot

The primary focus of Voter Services is on the redistricting process. One of our members, Judi Steele, has been listening to the California Redistricting Commission's public Zoom meetings and reporting back to the group.



The committee sent letters to all cities and school districts in Fresno County discussing the Fair Maps Act, which creates

standardized redistricting criteria to better keep communities together and prevent partisan gerrymandering. The letter requested that entities have at least one public work session to gather and utilize public input on their proposed process and the selection of a proposed consultant prior to their selection. Included in the letter was a resolution calling for a Fair and Inclusive Redistricting Process.

We also asked whether their board members are elected at large or by district and whether those that elect board members at large are considering moving to voting by district. The governor issued an executive order in March that prevented the change from at-large voting to voting by district due to Covid-19 and the inability at that time to hold public meetings. So, far there has been no change to that order. The committee is also focusing on develop

ing a powerpoint presentation to community-based organizations and Communities of Interest regarding the redistricting process.

Below is an interview with new County Clerk James Kus.

Background

He completed graduate work at Johns Hopkins focused on biostatistics and epidemiology. He returned to teach epidemiology at Fresno State and work in consulting. He has never worked on a political campaign.

Experience at the Fresno County Clerk's office.

He began as a volunteer poll worker 20 years ago. In 2012 he became an election coordinator. In 2014 he worked on election training. And eventually was the trainer for all workers. He became a program manager in 2018, in charge of the warehouse. He was promoted to Assistant County Clerk in 2020. Following the retirement of Brandi Orth, he was appointed to fill the remainder of her term, which ends in 2022. He will need to run for election to continue in the post. He emphasized the importance of the position being viewed as non-partisan and thus changed his voter registration from a party preference to no party preference.

Priorities

Continuing to implement the Voters Choice Act is a priority. There will be a June election in Parlier. On

November 2 there will be district elections for five special districts.

There is no set date for the governor's recall election as there is a lengthy verification process and financial analysis to be completed first. Most likely the election will be in November or December

Election audit as discussed by the Board of Supervisors

An audit of votes for statewide offices and congressional districts must be requested within 30 days. For local elections the request must be made within five days of the election. Since those timelines have passed, the BOS cannot request an audit of the votes. Only a judge can order that. Ballots are kept locked for 22 months.

Elections safety in Fresno County

The Dominion Voting System utilized in Fresno was first certified at the federal level with an additional certification process done by California. In Fresno County there is pre and post-testing for logic and accuracy. The Dominion Voting System with servers and tallying machines all stored in a locked room accessible only by IT teams.

How comfortable are you with the DMV's voter registration process?

If renewing your license online, the voter registration part only pops up if it has been verified that you are a citizen. Identification needs to be shown when renewing online. It is not only illegal for a non-citizen to register on paper (e.g. outside a store) but also prevents them from ever becoming a citizen.

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Measure C update

by Mary Savala

The Fresno County Council of Governments and the Fresno County Transportation Authority have begun a renewal process for the county's one-half cent transportation sales tax, Measure C, which is due to expire in 2026. A technical working committee has been established to support development of the 2026 Measure C Extension Expenditure Plan by identifying alternatives and recommendations for the plan such as:

- ◆ **Recommendations for tax percentages, priorities, duration**
- ◆ **Allocations for financing the Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategies**
- ◆ **Accountability standards**
- ◆ **Providing work products for Executive Committee review and feedback.**

A ballot will be ready for voters in November 2022, run by the Chamber of Commerce, well ahead of the expiration of the present Measure C. The tax measure requires a two-thirds vote.

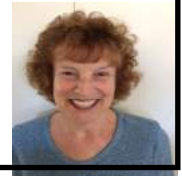
The first Measure C, passed in 1986, provided \$882M for local transportation financing divided 70% for urban needs, and 30% of the revenues for rural needs. The renewal in 2006 will raise \$1.4B by 2026, divided 50/50 for urban and rural needs, and funds for multimodal transportation.

Meetings of the working committee have been held to explain the mission of the working and executive committees, establish ground rules for the working committee, explain the community engagement plan, an overview of Measure C. overviews of the Regional Transportation Plan, Sustainable Community Strategies, and background information on population, employment growth and expected demands on Fresno County's transportation system. Both committees consist of elected officials, government staff and community stake holders. All Measure C documents, and other materials are available at: [HTTP://MeasureC.com/Executive-Committee-Technical-Working-Group](http://MeasureC.com/Executive-Committee-Technical-Working-Group) .

Our member Bill Jordan serves as alternate to the Measure C Citizens Advisory Committee representative on the working committee, while I serve as ADA and Seniors representative on that committee. Next meeting of the working group is June 23 3:00 to 4:30 by Zoom. Contact either of us through your roster to join the

Water News

by Diane Merrill



The LWVC Water Committee is hosting a workshop at the state convention on "Top Water Concerns in 2021." The workshop will include an update on recent Committee activities and an opportunity for League members from around the state to share their water concerns. The workshop is from 12:00 to 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday June 8 and pre-registration is required.

In other news, in the 2021-2022 California legislative session LWVC is supporting important legislation that has been a top priority of Water Committee members for a number of years. If put on the ballot by the Legislature and supported by the voters, ACA-1 would lower the vote threshold for the approval of local general obligation bonds and certain special taxes from two-thirds to 55 percent to fund important public infrastructure, such as affordable housing and water system upgrades.

When it comes to water infrastructure, the Public Policy Institute of California reports that in 2014-2016 local water utilities accounted for 85 percent of annual water system funding, while the State provided 12 percent and the federal government provided 3 percent. Often local governments are required to provide some level of matching funding to obtain Federal and State loans and grants. Passage of ACA-1 would make it easier to local agencies to come up with matching funds.

In the San Joaquin Valley, the Central Coast, and other areas of California, local water agencies will need to install infrastructure to conserve water and to recharge depleted groundwater to meet the requirements of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Many local government agencies will also need to construct and operate water treatment systems to meet water quality standards for nitrates, 123-TCP, arsenic, and other contaminants.

meeting by Zoom. If you want to participate, contact either of us through your roster information. We have signed on to a letter from the Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability to the Council of Governments and the Transportation Authority reminding them of the importance of transparency in the renewal process, the urgency to address neglected needs for environmental justice, and the importance of community buy-in for the ballot proposal. rudysavala@cocast.net





Too often, as a care provider for patients with rheumatoid arthritis and lupus, I am confronted with a decision about prescribing a single medication that will increase their annual cost for medical care by a factor of, say, 10. We cannot know the actual multiple because all health plans keep that a secret, but I am talking about many tens of thousands of dollars yearly, likely to be continued indefinitely. The biggest health plan payer is our government, directly covering over a quarter of all health care costs. But indirectly we *all* pay for *all* our ever-accelerating healthcare expenditures. How should a physician weigh the conflicting interests of their patient and our society? Medical oaths and traditions do not provide useful guidance on this 21st century conundrum.

Who is responsible?

One obvious solution is to let the health insurers take responsibility for determining the value of expensive treatments. If the drug or procedure has proven to provide benefit in proportion to its costs, then the health plan would pay for it. There are complex but logical methods for performing this type of value analysis, but there are also difficulties with this approach. It requires a lot of clinical data that may be problematic or impossible to obtain and very expensive to regenerate through new research. It also requires a society that accepts the proposition that there are limits to what it can pay to relieve suffering, disability, and death

But the public, and especially those affected by the withholding of available but low-value treatments, will occasionally use the media and litigation to fight back. They are often assisted by special interest health charities, themselves heavily funded by the pharmaceutical industry (Pharma). Health insurers are understandably wary of accepting primary responsibility for these treatment decisions.

Some health plans have sponsored health economics and outcomes research (known as HEOR) but would clearly prefer governments or respected non-governmental HEOR agencies to propagate guidelines for expensive treatments. This would distribute the responsibility for treatment denial among several respected organizations.

High costs require documentation

So far, the health plans have been content to resist high-cost treatments by requiring high copays and extended physician documentation of patients' qualifications. When I appeal to a health plan to provide, or continue providing, an expensive drug, I must submit documentation of treatment failures of first-line agents as well as specific outcome scores. Too often the health plan has changed its offerings of preferred agents, requiring me to redo my entire plan with the patient. This aspect of American healthcare is not sustainable, but not easily changed due to the financial and political power of Pharma, which benefits from its hidden and gamed marketing strategies with health plans.

Saving money is an outstanding way of earning a living, and in the American healthcare system there is a lot of cash to be saved. This is a driving force that explains the rapid growth in non-governmental and private HEOR firms and in medical database companies that mine redacted clinic and hospital records to provide the needed data for the research. The Patient-Centered Outcome Research Institute has become an important granting agency for such research around the country. Reports have found some FDA-approved medications to be of no or low-value despite high prices, perhaps setting the scene for warranted skepticism about Pharma marketing and direct-to-consumer advertising.

Federal Drug Administration needs update

A pre-emptive approach to this problem would be to fund our Federal Drug Administration to function in part like an HEOR agency, declining to approve medications that provide no cost or clinical advantages over existing agents. This enhanced FDA could, through post-marketing surveillance, discover previously unrecognized low-value products. This would put us on par with the UK's National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, which continuously evaluates drugs and medical devices on behalf of the UK National Health Service.

HOMELESSNESS *(continued from page 1)*

ing that data that is needed to address the issues behind this statistic. Linder recommend that young people have to be trained to recognize unhealthy relationships before they turn violent, and to have training in experiencing relationships with mutual respect, rather than being about power and control. **Parents need to create an atmosphere where their children can come to them and say, "I made a mistake but now I need help."**

Dyer's talk : an interesting surprise

by Francine M. Farber

He's the same big broad-shouldered guy, but his outlook has changed. That's what Mayor Jerry Dyer, formerly Fresno's long-time police chief, told about 50 League of Women Voters members and friends at its virtual annual meeting on April 30. It was the largest turnout in memory for an Annual Meeting, which celebrated the League's 80th year in Fresno.

Living former presidents of the League were honored with a home delivery of roses and a personal tribute voiced over Zoom. Linda Mack, the second woman elected to the Fresno City Council, was president from 1969 to 1971. The others following were Lynne Rodriguez, Nancy Richardson, Mary Savala, Jane Worsley, Joan Lipton, Jacquie Canfield, Ann Kaufher, Francine Farber, Nyla Zender and current president Marianne Kast.

"I've come to realize that many people in Fresno are excluded: excluded from the ability to do well, to have a home, to live in a nice neighborhood, to have a good job or to enjoy the finer things in life," the new mayor said. When he was police chief, that was not always his perspective. He is determined to change this widespread condition, starting with "Beautify Fresno," an effort led by Director Mark Standriff to make conditions more acceptable and livable for all. "Fresno has lost its curb appeal," Dyer said, noting that three out of four weekends he is out picking up trash and removing other blight from around the city. Some beautification efforts feature a neighborhood blitz where all city resources descend on a single area and repair sidewalks, remove graffiti, replace street signs, plant trees, and do whatever it takes to give residents the signal that they matter and that they deserve a pleasant neighborhood.

He also takes pride in his effort to place, not displace, people experiencing homelessness. "We don't just move them from place to place. We have reconditioned motels that we purchased to provide temporary decent housing for as long as they need – 30, 60, 90 days or more – to give them needed services and help them become productive citizens again." He is looking forward to making additional motel sites available for this purpose but also knows that permanent supportive housing is necessary after these tem-

porary motel stays. "So far we have 244 formerly homeless individuals in temporary housing with services. We are purchasing six more motels," Dyer stated.



He and other mayors recently asked Governor Newsom to provide 20 billion dollars over five years to purchase motels or other alternative living spaces such as tiny houses, accessory housing which uses land behind an already established home, and even assisting first-time home buyers with down payment funds.

Speaking of other improvements in which he is interested and already active, Dyer said there are about 3,000 people living downtown now and he wants it to grow to 10,000, which he sees as the catalyst to make downtown great. The city is encouraging small affordable apartments of 400 to 500 square feet and already has a six month waiting list. Mayor Dyer believes Fresno needs a total of about 35,000 units to meet demand, and envisions the corridors of Blackstone, Kings Canyon and Shaw having this type of housing development.

He is looking at the long-time needs of southwest Fresno in which the city is investing 107 million dollars. A state center community college will rise on this land with a large automotive training center. There will be single family residences as well, and all this will be accomplished with skills provided by people who already live in west Fresno.

Because of the pandemic a huge infusion of dollars will be coming our way from state and federal sources sometime in the next month or so. While there will be governmental rules that may limit spending parameters, it is anticipated that much can be used to support many of the above initiatives. It wasn't clear whether there will be opportunity for significant public input into spending decisions for this infusion, but early childhood supporters are already preparing to advocate for a healthy share to go toward supporting care and education especially for the zero to five population in Fresno.

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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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