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**Monday, June 13**  
**Regular Board Meeting**  
**4 p.m. In person**  
**Stone Soup**

**Monday, June 13**  
**Social for Volunteers**  
**5 p.m. in person \* Stone Soup**  
**Details to be announced**

**Thursday, June 23**  
**Police Chief Paco**  
**Balderrama**  
**5:30 p.m. in person**  
**Stone Soup**

**Thursday, August**  
**26**  
**Women's Equality Day**  
**Lipton Award**

**The**

**FRESNO**

**VOTER**

*Our 81st Year!*

**CHAT with the CHIEF!**

**Wednesday, June 23**

**5:30 p.m. \* Stone Soup**

**In Person**

*"To the citizens of Fresno, the residents of Fresno, I can say that things are going to change. "We're going to work very hard to make this city a safer place to live."*



**Juan "Paco" Balderrama**

Fresno's first Latino Chief of Police, Juan "Paco" Balderrama, will be speaking about priorities for Fresno and responding to your questions and concerns.

*Refreshments will be served.*

*Please let us know you are coming. [fourkasts@gmail.com](mailto:fourkasts@gmail.com)*

**Your vote counts in the June 6 election: so many ways to do it!**

**Drop It Off**



**Mail It In**



**Vote In Person**



JUNE 19

**HAPPY FATHER'S DAY**



## Co-President's Message



Last month's leak of the Supreme Court draft opinion in the *Dobbs v Jackson* case is of special interest to the League. While it is possible that the final decision will differ from the draft, there is little hope the opinion will sustain the right to abortion until fetal viability that was affirmed in *Roe v Wade* 50 years ago.

Although we in California have the benefit of reproductive protections, many women in the country will be significantly impeded in exercising any choice. LWVUS has long advocated for expanded health care and for women's right to reproductive health care, including abortion. In 2014 we joined in an amicus brief in a case challenging provisions of the Affordable Care Act by employers who maintained their religious beliefs allowed them to deny contraceptive coverage. In 2021 LWVUS joined the Texas League in responding to that state's restrictive legislation. They wrote, "Bodily autonomy is a personal right. The League believes every person deserves access and privacy to make their own reproductive choices, and we will continue to fight for reproductive justice in Texas and across the nation."

In the *Dobbs* case, the League joined in another brief opposing the Mississippi statute that would ban abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy, a limit below the viability threshold of 24 weeks established in *Roe*. The brief argued that the state had failed to demonstrate a "special justification" to overturn precedent, especially in weighing the practical effects on poor and Black women who already experience restricted access to health care and poor health outcomes. The erosion of *Roe*'s "viability threshold" represented by the decision is of particular concern as some states are pushing legislation prohibiting access after just six weeks.

*Roe vs. Wade* was initially decided based on the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment which prohibits states from making laws that would deprive citizens "of life liberty or property without due process of law." That amendment gives federal government the power to enforce civil rights protections against state efforts to limit them. It was enacted to stop states from passing laws restricting the citizenship rights of recently freed slaves. In recent decades it has been used to expand protections where states have sought to violate them: miscegenation laws, bans on same-sex marriage, school segregation, disability discrimination.

Fear exists that the reversal of *Roe* is a step by Constitutional strict constructionists to move us back to an era of unrestricted states rights and away from federal protections. Not a comforting prospect. *Kay*



May 2022

**Executive Committee:** As required by our by-laws, the Board elected two of its members, Sue Goldman and Pat Campbell, to the Executive Committee. The other members are co-presidents Francine Farber and Kay Bertken and Director at Large Marianne Kast.

**Centennial:** The 100 Notable Women posters were shown at the Madden Library for two weeks. A special event featuring Luisa Medina, Judge Jane Cardoza, Elizabeth Lavelle and Juanita Stephenson attracted 25 Fresno State students to listen to their life stories and suggestions for success.

**Awards:** Until June 15 we are seeking nominees for the Women's Equality Day award for an outstanding woman in a non-traditional field, and the Lipton Award for an outstanding volunteer of any gender in a League area of advocacy, which is very broad. Send to [fmfarber@hotmail.com](mailto:fmfarber@hotmail.com) or [kaybertken752@gmail.com](mailto:kaybertken752@gmail.com).

**Transportation:** We agreed to sign on to a letter regarding the renewal of Measure C and the lack of public participation in deciding how the money will be spent. The letter will be published in the Fresno Bee on May 15.

**Special Project:** Marianne Kast and Kay Bertken have volunteered to seek out a prominent space where we could commission a public mural depicting women's issues. We have funds available to do this from generous gifts from our members this past year.

**Donations:** Generous gifts from our members this month were received from Christine Boogaert and Francine Farber.

**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. 6 Editor: Francine M. Farber

Thank You

**Behavioral Health**  
by Carolyn Evans



**Water News**  
by Diane Merrill



May was a festive month for the mental health community as Mental Health Awareness was celebrated with the theme: *Take Action for Change*. There were many activities to educate, entertain, and celebrate. The Board of Supervisors issued a proclamation. The NAMI Walk was an in-person event this year. Posters and billboards were visible throughout the county. There were ads on social media, as well as on television. The Fresno Grizzlies hosted a mental health night where the team wore green jerseys.

**Shortage of professionals**

But at its May meeting the Behavioral Health Board learned that the news was not all good. Throughout California, and especially in the Central Valley, there is a behavioral health workforce crisis. Psychiatrists historically have been in short supply in Fresno County, but now there is a serious shortage of psychologists, clinicians, social workers, and case managers. Though wages vary across behavioral health occupations, employment shortage impacts all types of workers. Many strategies suggested to address the problem have long-term goals, but the crisis is now.



Locally the Department of Behavioral Health is actively recruiting and contracting for additional staff. Clinical care staff is being diverted to the most critical needs, deferring other important work. The Department is seeking additional funding supports wherever possible.

**Governor's new proposal**

In the midst of the workforce shortage, the Governor has proposed Community Assistance, Recovery & Empowerment (CARE) Courts in his May budget revise. Under this new plan an individual with untreated schizophrenia or other psychotic disorders may be referred to the Court. After a clinical evaluation, county behavioral health staff, the individual, and a supporter develop a Care Plan. While treatment, housing, and other needed services are acquired, CARE Court provides accountability with status hearings for 12-24 months, as needed. Though there has been much publicity about the proposal, many questions remain unanswered

The Board will host a Public Hearing on June 15 on the Prevention and Early Intervention portion and a title change for the Mental Health Services Act 2022-2023 Plan. You are invited to attend by contacting [dominja@fresnocountyca.gov](mailto:dominja@fresnocountyca.gov)  
[evansalca@comcast.net](mailto:evansalca@comcast.net)

As reported here last January, the LWVC Water Committee is interested in the process to update California's indoor residential water use standard. In 2018 the Legislature instructed the California Department of Water Resources and the State Water Resources Control Board to conduct a study on residential indoor water use and make recommendations for updating the State's indoor residential water use standard. Residential indoor water use is measured at the water district level and not at the household level.

**Water strategies are successful**

The completed study found that water conservation strategies have been so successful that California's current median indoor residential water use of 48 gallons per capita per day (gpcd) is already less than the recommended 2025 target of 55 gpcd.

Legislation is needed to enact new standards, and Senate Bill 1157 is moving through the legislature. LWVC issued a letter of support for this bill. League advocacy is based on its positions supporting wise, sustainable management of natural resources and energy in the public interest, with an emphasis on conservation and with protections for low and moderate income households and for the environment.

**Standards to reduce energy cost**

Setting a standard for indoor water use efficiency that is in line with existing median indoor water use will help to ensure that water service providers are better prepared for climate change. It will also reduce energy costs associated with pumping, distributing, treating, and cleaning water supplies and help reduce water costs to ratepayers, including low-income ratepayers.

Updating the state objective for efficient indoor residential water use to an achievable standard is necessary to help water agencies identify water waste and set realistic planning targets. Other benefits may include avoiding costs for expensive new water supplies such as dams and diversions that may be harmful to the environment.



## GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

by Radley Reep

In April the county was to have released for public review its eighth draft update of the General Plan, a draft update of the Zoning Ordinance and a draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Final action by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors was planned for the holiday season, around November and December.

The county postponed the release of draft documents for three months until July, but is continuing to schedule final approval for the end of the year.

The California Department of Justice has informed the county that the draft General Plan released for public review in July 2021 appeared to be inconsistent with (1) race discrimination in housing laws, (2) the air district's community air emissions reduction plan, (3) state code pertaining to environmental justice policies and (4) statutory requirements regarding climate adaptation and resiliency strategies.

I attended one of the five county meetings held this year on the update of the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. I asked the staff four questions which are included below with their answers.

- ◆ Given the three-month delay in the release of draft documents, wouldn't it be best to postpone final county approval until after the holidays when it would be more convenient for county residents to attend meetings? *Answer: they were not sure whether final action would occur before or after the holidays.*
- ◆ Did the county plan to hold more public meetings prior to releasing the EIR, in early July? *Answer: they were working on scheduling additional meetings.* As of the third week in May, their website showed no additional meetings

The county has identified key changes to the General Plan Policy Document including: revisions to address environmental justice issues; improvements to address adaptation to climate change; inclusion of study areas for new industrial and residential development; new analysis and policies related to air quality

- ◆ Will the county release its latest draft of the General Plan Policy Document prior to initiating the EIR? *Answer: The staff said they would give it some thought.*
- ◆ Will the county provide the public with a separate document that lists all substantive changes being made to the Zoning Ordinance? *Answer: at present, the county does not plan to provide such a list. radleyreep@netzero.com*

## Climate Change

by Connie Young



Environmentalist, author and journalist Bill McKibben will speak at the 30th anniversary celebration of the Fresno Center for Nonviolence. The event will be held on June 11 at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno, 2672 E. Alluvial Ave., from 2-4 p.m. Tickets are \$20 and will be sold only at the door. Masks are required.



Bill McKibben

McKibben's 1989 book *The End of Nature* is regarded as the first book for a general audience about climate change. He's gone on to write 20 books, and his work appears regularly in periodicals from the *New Yorker* to *Rolling Stone*.

In addition to the Gandhi Peace Prize and many other honors, he received the Right Livelihood Award, sometimes called the alternative Nobel, from the Swedish Parliament. *Foreign Policy* named him to its inaugural list of the world's 100 most important global thinkers.

McKibben helped found 350.org, the first global grassroots climate campaign, which has organized climate actions on every continent, including Antarctica. He has played a leading role in opposing big oil pipeline projects like Keystone XL. He also led a fossil fuel divestment campaign, which has become the biggest anti-corporate campaign in history, with endowments worth more than \$40 trillion stepping back from oil, gas and coal.

McKibben also is the founder of TH!RD ACT, which organizes people over the age of 60 for action on climate and justice. Its current campaign, Banking on our Future, is urging Chase, Citibank, Wells Fargo, and Bank of America to stop funding climate-destroying fossil fuel projects by the end of this year. In 2020 these four banks collectively loaned fossil fuel companies approximately \$210 billion.

[cyoung@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cyoung@sbcglobal.net)

# Health Care

by Richard Bertken, M.D.



Basic and applied research in medical therapeutics is expensive and

## *Draft of a suggested letter to selected members of Congress :*

**Dear Senator/Representative: I am sorry that Congress failed to pass HR3 during consideration of the Build Back Better legislation. It would have authorized Medicare to bargain for prescription drugs.**

The U.S. Veterans Health Care System pays less than half for prescription medications compared to Medicare D. Data from other advanced democracies shows similar savings that arise, like the VA example, from direct negotiations with pharmaceutical manufacturers (“Pharma” for short). If direct Pharma negotiations were adopted across the American healthcare portfolio, we would realize 175 billion dollars in yearly savings. More importantly, it could initiate a gradual process of targeted budgeting for national healthcare.

Unlike wholesale reshaping of U.S. Healthcare, competitive bidding for drug pricing should have bipartisan support. It meets conservative goals of using competitive market forces to determine prices and of reducing government spending. It would simplify and illuminate the pathway of drugs to patient. That path is now clogged with hidden lawyerly contracts, kickbacks, discounts, and patient coupons. Physicians cannot know what they are spending on their patients’ treatments and respond prudently.

Pharma’s political campaign support is certainly bipartisan and generous, as I am sure you are aware: about 4 billion dollars yearly. About two-thirds of members of Congress and three-quarters of state legislators receive money from Pharma. But Pharma’s reach is broader: seven billion dollars annually for direct-to-consumer advertising (70% of all TV ad dollars); over a billion yearly to “charities” that pay patients’ drug co-pays; a similar amount to disease-specific health charities and health professional organizations; and 2 billion annually to key physician influencers, including those who help write treatment guidelines. The result is a giant megaphone that magnifies their payouts for product promotion. Pharma is its own sovereign entity.

The double-the-cost premiums we pay for prescription drugs exceeded, by 63%, the research and development costs of the 15 leading Pharma companies. *Health Affairs* published this data in 2017. Subsequent analysis has shown that increased Pharma income has been directed to product promotion. High American prices for drugs are not essential for funding Parma R and D.



**An Opportunity  
for Members**



**LWVUS**

**National Convention**

**June 23—26**

**Denver and Virtual**

As a delegate you will be able to vote for three policies which we support:

- ◆ **Immigration reform**
- ◆ **Rewriting the healthcare position**
- ◆ **Adopting California’s social justice position**

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**Contact Kay Bertken**

**[kaybertken752@gmail.com](mailto:kaybertken752@gmail.com)**

vitaly important. It must be sustained. However, it is illogical to tax Americans in pursuit of lower prices for the rest of the developed world. Research should be conscientiously supported by an international consortium of granting agencies. At the next opportunity, please cast a vote for our government’s right to negotiate drug prices.

*Sincerely,*  
**An American Patient**  
[rbertken@comcast.net](mailto:rbertken@comcast.net)

## Education

by Kay Bertken



The recent Bullard and Edison Black Student Union protests over a circulated social media post of a Bullard student posing in a makeshift Klan hood in the school's weight room have occupied news media and the last Board meeting of May.

Some further racist posts evidently followed that initial photo. The BSU students staged a march to the school district office downtown, where they met with the superintendent and two board members to talk about their own experiences of racial insults and a lack of appropriate school-level support. They provided the district with a list of demands. Many of those same students spoke movingly at the May Board meeting, citing previous incidents in the district, especially at Bullard.

### Teachers must be responsive to racist events

The District has acknowledged their concerns and responded positively to many of their demands, including moving to establish student groups on each high school campus to monitor and report any incidents and school follow-up. The students have also asked that the district increase its hiring and support of Black teachers. The administration has stressed that all district staff members need to be united in their response to racist events and not be dismissive or even neutral.

### Grades TK-6 to get 30 more days

Regular business has continued to focus on funding and the budget. The Extended Learning Department has received \$40.5 million additional funds targeted to grades TK-6. The funding mandates offer extended learning opportunities to 50% of the student population, to be expanded to 100% next year, and add 30 days of services beyond the regular school year.

### Funds for summer academies, camps

These funds will expand summer academies—formerly summer school—to all 63 elementary schools, up from 16 last year. These academies will operate in June for a regular school-length day. The programs will align instruction to the students' identified needs with a focus on math and reading.

### Next School Board Meetings:

June 1, June 15

In July the district will partner with community groups to provide summer camps at no cost to 12,000 students. Camp categories will include: Adventure, College and Career, Creative Arts, Crafts, Sports, and Fitness. The timing of the academies and camps will allow students to participate in both.

### Fresno Unified to get \$10 million more

Governor Newsom has released his May revision of the State budget. He has proposed significant increases in education funding in the form of a cost of living adjustment that will result in an additional \$10 million to FUSD. Billions in other allocations will also flow to education, some of it in available grants. The specific implications to FUSD are not all known yet.

It is also up to the State Legislature to approve the



Governor's proposals. That approval will not happen till the summer, so these new funds would be part of a revision to the District's own budget which will be passed on June 15.

### Slatic accuses colleagues re police


Trustee Slatic took the unusual step at one Board meeting to remove himself from the dais and address the Board during the time set aside for members of the public to speak. He read a statement from the floor accusing his fellow trustees ("those on the left") of making a political statement in removing "the cops" from middle school campuses and contended that there had been more problems at those campuses. He also accused the Board President of refusing his request to include an agenda item to discuss a return of "the cops".

Months ago, the trustees determined to end Board-Superintendent communications as a regular part of the public meeting, largely because Trustee Slatic used the occasion to make long speeches, including complaints about staff.

[kaybertken752@gmail.com](mailto:kaybertken752@gmail.com)

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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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**Please send your check payable to the League of Women Voters, Fresno, with registration form (below),  
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