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**THE**

## FRESNO VOTER

*Our 86th Year*



**Meet Nick Richardson, the newest City  
Council member representing District 6.**

**Thursday, June 26, 5:30 p.m. \* Stone Soup**

**Monday, June 16  
Regular Board Meeting  
4 p.m. In person  
Stone Soup**

**June 17—22  
LWVC Convention  
Zoom**

**Thursday, June 26  
5:30, Stone Soup  
Member Meeting**

Nick Richardson is a graduate of Buchanan High School and The Virginia Military Institute where he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps. A combat helicopter pilot, Nick joined the infantry as a combat aviation liaison and continues in that role today. He has served all over the world on active duty. Having majored in Political Science and Modern Languages, Nick is always excited to practice foreign languages, visit diverse cultural events, and lead Marines on new missions to far-off countries. A self-described “compassionate conservative”, Nick prioritizes fiscal responsibility, public engagement, and removing barriers for entrepreneurs to pursue their American dream. He is a life-long member of Mensa.



***No reservations required: light refreshments will be served***

***Members and Guests are welcome***

JUN



## Co-President's Message

by Robin Chiero



**I**n the Voter last month, the co-president's message encouraged realizing our hope with action. The League of Women Voters is a grassroots organization, and the more assistance and participation we have from our members the greater the impact we can make.

We know that our members have a wide range of knowledge, skills and experience about which we are often unaware. This month's message focuses on some of the ways Fresno League members can become involved locally to realize our hope with action. Although not an exhaustive list, I hope you will find something that intrigues and attracts you and that would be a good fit depending on your interests, skills, and available time. Experienced League members are always available to provide support and information as needed.

During election season, we engage in many activities to encourage voter participation, including candidate forums, voter registration events, presentations to groups on ballot propositions and on the importance of voting, assisting the elections office by unfolding ballots and helping answer phones, and updating our election information site, VOTE411.org by obtaining contact information and encouraging participation from candidates running for office throughout the county.

We also have many non-election activities for you to consider.

**Government Meetings:** Do you have time to attend government meetings, such as city council, county board of supervisors, boards of education, or other commissions?

**Social Media:** Are you someone who likes to use social media and can help us grow our social media presence?

**Legislative Interviews:** Would you like to participate in the annual interviews of state legislators who represent Fresno County?

**Event/Meeting Planning:** Would you like to help plan and organize meetings such as our monthly member meetings and other programs?

*(continued on page 7)*

**The Voter is a monthly publication of the LWV Fresno**

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

**Volume 66 No. 6 Editor: Francine M. Farber**



**May 2025**

**Membership:** The new ChapterSpot procedure has caused confusion and some delay in members renewing their membership. In another week or so we will divide up the non-renewals and make telephone calls.

**Program Planning:** We started planning Women's Equality Day for August 26, the actual date. We agreed that Police Chief Mindy Casto is our first choice but still have to find a candidate for the Werner Lipton Award.

**Nominating Committee:** Sue Goldman and Marie Slater are the two additional members of the Nominating Committee, which already consists of Faye Nennig, Chair; Angelo Presto, and Jan Maroot.

**Manual:** The Board Member Manual from 2017 needs to be updated. Members are asked to review their job descriptions and edit them by our next meeting.

**Incarcerated voters:** We want to learn about this process and ensure that these individuals access their right to vote.

**Monday Study Club:** Robin and Kay made a presentation to this group of women who were interested in learning more about the League. They may be interested in election work.

**Supervisors:** Fresno County is updating the Del Ray General Plan. Radley pointed out significant omissions that need to be addressed.

**Convention:** Attendees should do brief write-ups of workshops to be used in the Voter.

**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. Your estate planning is encouraged to consider LWVF. Please make out checks to LWVF and send to Treasurer, LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno 93710.**

## Climate Action

by Donna McBrien



I've been attending San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Board meetings for several months and have been impressed with their administrative capability.

It appears budget preparation, accounting, financial reporting and oversight of state and federal grants are carried out with full transparency. The Government Finance Officers' Association recently awarded the District a Certificate of Achievement, its highest form of recognition. Their commitment to cultivating a positive workplace is also demonstrated at these meetings.

The Air Pollution Control District is responsible for air quality management in eight California counties: San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and part of Kern. Their mission is to improve the health and quality of life for all Valley residents through efficient, effective and entrepreneurial air quality management strategies. The good news is that pollution levels have continued to decline over the last 30+ years, despite the fact that the number of people living, working and driving in the Valley has steadily increased. According to the District's most recent Annual Report, the region meets several key federal air quality standards, including those for nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, PM10, the 1-hour ozone standard, and the 24-hour PM2.5 standard.

Since 1992 the district has adopted nearly 700 measures to reduce emissions. Some of the programs currently offered by the district include funding for electric heat pumps and emission-related vehicle repairs, as well as incentives to replace high-polluting tractors with cleaner alternatives, phase out open agricultural burning, and replacement of gas-powered lawn mowers.

In 2024 the district received national recognition for its wildfire prevention and response efforts. However, there's more work to be done.



## Water News

by Diane Merrill



The North Kings Groundwater Sustainability Agency includes the cities of Fresno, Clovis and Kerman and the surrounding areas. Under California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, the Agency is tasked with taking action to bring local groundwater levels to a sustainable condition no later than 2040.

The Agency announced the first ever water flows into the City of Kerman's Lions Park groundwater recharge basin. This was made possible by the completion of an intertie connection to Fresno Irrigation District FID's canal system. This new intertie connection will help to improve Kerman's groundwater recharge capability now and into the future. The City of Kerman is a groundwater-dependent city so the intertie helps put water back into the ground to replenish the aquifer during wet years.

"We are grateful for the partnership with FID to receive surface water. Kerman is committed to making an impact on groundwater sustainability now and for the future" said City of Kerman Mayor Maria Pacheco.

Fresno County Supervisor Brian Pacheco, who also serves on the North Kings Groundwater Sustainability Board of Directors, said "the project relieves pressure on the local aquifers that are threatened with overdraft as the community continues growing.

"The Lions Park recharge project is a great example of bringing community agencies together for the greater good," Supervisor Pacheco said. This project is a way to add underground water storage to achieve more sustainable water tables for agriculture and residential users in growing communities like Kerman."

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In February 2024, the EPA strengthened the annual 2.5 standard from 12  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  (micrograms per cubic meter) to 9  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ . The California Air Resources Board (CARB) submitted recommendations to designate the San Joaquin Valley as nonattainment; the EPA's final designation expected in early 2026.

Once designated, the district will develop a State Implementation Plan in coordination with CARB to refine emissions inventories, model new strategies, and identify opportunities..... [dmcmbrien@gmail.com](mailto:dmcmbrien@gmail.com)

## Education *(continued from page 8)*

**Goal 1:** Improving literacy rates among first graders. Proposed funding includes appropriations for literacy coaches, a reading specialist, tutoring, family engagement efforts, as well as technology and supplies.

**:Goal 2** For those 3rd through 8<sup>th</sup> graders who are more than one year behind in their language achievement, increasing the percentage who accelerated their growth by more than a year. This effort would be allocated funding for academic coaches, extended learning coordinators, assessment materials, along with targeted professional development, tutoring supports and family engagement.

**Goal 3:** Increasing the percentage of students graduating from high school who are college and career ready. Recommended investments include counselors and CTE staffing, certification and pre-apprenticeship experiences, professional development for CTE and math, technology, and engagement with local industry and families.

**Goal 4:** Increasing the percentage of 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders who demonstrate defined life skills competencies. Recommendations include implementation of social-emotional behavioral assessments to all K-8 sites and professional development to integrate life-skills development across content areas. Specific listed investments include behavioral intervention specialists, clinical social workers and student portfolio tools.

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

### *Lipton Award*

Do you know a woman or man who is not a League member who has performed outstanding community advocacy and volunteerism over a considerable period of time and thus may be nominated for the Lipton Award?

The Lipton Award recognizes such a volunteer annually since the death of Dr Werner Lipton in 2006. He was the husband of our past president Joan Lipton, and was himself such a volunteer. Joan passed away this year and had been a Life member of the League, joining in 1973.

If you would like to nominate someone, please send that person's name and an explanation of why you are nominating her/him to [farberfrannola@gmail.com](mailto:farberfrannola@gmail.com) by July 5. The Award will be given at our Women's Equality Day celebration in August. Thank you for your interest.

## DONATIONS

This month generous donations were received from:

Andrea Farber De Zubiria

Nancy Griesser

Hanna Krebs

Monday Study Club

Nancy Whitmore

Donations are accepted gratefully. They may be sent for use in the general fund or for a specific purpose such as the RBG Scholarship fund.



### LWVC asks:

*Write to your senator  
to support SJR-1*

An "Article V Convention" can be called for by a state for any reason. BUT - There are no rules to limit what can be proposed or changed, giving powerful special interests free rein to rewrite the Constitution behind closed doors.

Senate Joint Resolution 1 (Wiener), sponsored by the League of Women Voters of California, would rescind all of California's prior calls for an Article V Constitutional Convention. In today's political climate, where extremist forces are actively seeking to undermine democracy, California's seven open calls for a convention offer a direct pathway to chaos. SJR-1 is our chance to close that door before it's too late.

**Act now - Stand with the League.  
Stand up for democracy.  
Support SJR-1!**

## Health Care

by Richard Bertken, M.D.



**I**n the December 2017 Voter, I wrote : *“Remarkably, President Trump has repeatedly advocated government action to lower prescription prices. His instinct to get a better deal could be a vital first step in moving incrementally to universal health care.”*

Two years later, at the end of his first term, he proposed a model of drug pricing based on using the much lower costs other advanced nations were negotiating. He called this pricing format “most favored nation (MFN)” status, although MFN agreements apply to nations, not private companies within a country.

Trump was unable to initiate this daunting task before his first term ended. As a corollary to this process, he wants to negotiate a “more equitable” pricing system that would increase drug prices abroad. This would supposedly reimburse the U.S. for our outsized basic research contribution to pharmaceutical innovation.

It certainly is true that America’s medical research has been prodigious, but its trajectory under the Trump administration looks bleak. Perhaps this idea of charging foreign health plans for our research is a bargaining ploy, but also a salute to the pharmaceutical industry’s need to maintain its generous income.

While undoing several provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act protecting Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries from high drug costs, the new administration did not ax Biden’s agreement with the pharmaceutical industry (“Pharma”) to negotiate prices of selected, high-priced drugs. So far, this plan is slated to begin in 2026.

The overwhelming excess of expense in American medicine, when compared with our peer nations, is attributable to excessive costs for medications and for needlessly complex administration. Current estimates of these excessive expenses hover around 600 billion dollars annually. Sadly, we are stuck with our historically fraught and circumstantially evolved healthcare portfolio, currently doing a fine imitation of a Rube Goldberg machine. American voters should patiently

and resolutely pursue substantial changes in the structure and cost of our national healthcare.

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*Opzelura. Izervay. Izba. Zykadia. Farxiga.* Why are we besieged by ads for crazily named medicines for many uncommon illnesses? The besieging is due to poorly understood but massive return on investment for Pharma. And, unlike all other countries except New Zealand, the U.S. permits direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA). DCTA is a booming business due to a series of court decisions affirming commercial speech as protected free speech. These decisions were congruent with Citizens United, the SCOTUS decision allowing money to dictate the outcomes of our over-long political campaigns.

The weird naming of drugs is a result of very necessary measures to prevent dangerous confusion of one medicine with another. In the past, look-alike and sound-alike names for medications presented the greatest danger for drug errors. Other hazards emerged from the need to meet transnational and transcultural conflicts. A drug name must not be offensive and misleading in another language or culture.

\*\*\*

So...now you know.

[rbertken@comcast.net](mailto:rbertken@comcast.net)

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## Follow the campaign from LWVUS

**LWVUS**Unite and **Rise 8.5** will fight for our democracy on multiple fronts, from the courts to the streets. More actions will be outlined in the future, but as of today, here are a few you can take:

- ♦ Protect democracy: Tell your Senators to oppose the anti-voter SAVE Act;
- ♦ Raise your voice about illegal deportations: join mobilizations around immigrant rights and due process with organizations like the National Partnership for New Americans, United We Dream, and others;
- ♦ “Turn Up the Heat” on elected officials: Connect directly with your representatives on the issues that matter via Town Halls and other opportunities
- ♦ Act locally: Join local organizations like your state or local League to act on the issues that matter in your community

## Updating a General Plan:

# Del Rey has water problem

by Radley Reep



When the County revised its General Plan in 2024, recommendations were put in place to begin updating eight antiquated community plans.

The first community plan to be updated is that for Del Rey, a disadvantaged unincorporated community of 1,500 people located just south of the city of Sanger. The Del Rey plan was last comprehensively updated in 1976.

To update a community plan, the County must prepare an environmental assessment under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and, should the update expand the community's boundary, attempt to mitigate the loss of prime farmland.

By law, the environmental assessment for the update of the Del Rey Community Plan must address any and all potential adverse impacts that were not previously evaluated when the County revised its General Plan in 2024

In assessing the Del Rey plan, the County concluded there were no adverse impacts beyond those that had been evaluated in 2024, but that conclusion was incorrect. It is widely known that Del Rey's community water system is contaminated with TCP (1,2,3-trichloropropene), a suspected cancer-causing agent whose presence in groundwater is the result of years

of pesticides and fungicides being applied to neighboring farmland.

The environmental work prepared for the revision of the General Plan in 2024 did not address that contamination problem. As a result, the County has no option but to disclose and evaluate TCP contamination as part of the process to update the Del Rey Community Plan.

With respect to the loss of prime farmland, the update has the potential to convert approximately forty acres of prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance to non-agricultural uses (residential, commercial and public facilities). That being so, the County must implement a mitigation measure adopted in 2024 that directs the County to consider and adopt feasible mitigation to offset the loss of that farmland. However, citing an overriding need for housing and a need for the expansion of wastewater facilities, the County's planning staff concluded, albeit improperly, that the update of the Plan was exempt from the requirement to evaluate the loss of agricultural land.

For the past 20 years, the League has advocated for the needs of disadvantaged unincorporated communities, and so the League welcomes the update of the Del Rey Community Plan. But that said, the League also believes that the County must disclose and address all significant environmental impacts.

To that point, the League submitted comment letters to the Fresno County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. The League has asked the County to adhere to environmental regulations, which require the County to environmentally evaluate the TCP contamination problem and the potential loss of prime farmland.

[Radleyreep@netzero.com](mailto:Radleyreep@netzero.com)

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**Katharine McCormick**

**1875—1967**

You've never heard of her but in the 1920's she smuggled more than 1,000 diaphragms from Europe for clinics set up by birth control advocate Margaret Sanger

Katharine McCormick, a suffragist, provided almost all of the funding (\$2 million which would be about \$423 million today) for a safe, reliable oral contraception pill.

Advocacy was in her blood. Her mother was a supporter of women's rights. Her grandfather maintained an Underground Railroad stop in his home where Katherine was born and her great grandfather was Treasury Secretary under President John Adams. She attended MIT and majored in biology, a rare achievement for women in that era. Her husband, who was heir to an immense fortune, came from the family that owned International Harvester and persuaded her to marry him instead of going to medical school. Shortly after marriage he was diagnosed with schizophrenia and remained under care at a family estate in California. She never divorced and never remarried. Her inheritance from him and from her mother made her one of the wealthiest women in America.

## Behavioral Health

*(continued from page 8)*

Board members made a site visit to Cultiva La Salud, whose mission centers around health equity



and the need for a reinvestment in disadvantaged communities in the Central Valley. Cultiva La Salud's early work concentrated on obesity prevention but

quickly evolved into a broader frame and concentration around health equity to address root causes such as the lack of safe places to play and lack of access to healthy foods and beverages.

The organization serves residents in Fresno and Eastern Fresno \County, many of whom are undocumented. Everyone is welcome to participate. Ten case managers work with a caseload of 30 or more families, and refer to appropriate services, including mental health services. Federal funding has been terminated, so the future of the organization is in flux.

[evansalca@comcast.net](mailto:evansalca@comcast.net)

## Co-President's Message

*(continued from page 2)*

**League Website:** Our Fresno League website requires regular updating and maintaining. Would you like to help keep it up to date so that it continues to provide valuable information to members and others?

If you are interested in and/or would like more information on any of these opportunities, or if you have ideas on how else you might participate, please call (559) 226-8683 or email [info.lwvfresno@gmail.com](mailto:info.lwvfresno@gmail.com).

*Robin*

## Voter Services

by Sue Goldman



The Voter Services committee is working on the following issues:

**Public Service Announcements:** We are waiting to hear from Fresno State's media department about the cost of producing a PSA.

**Radio Bilingue:** We are hoping to work with them during election season to promote voting..

**Mis and disinformation:** Elizabeth Arakelian spoke at a League event regarding her podcast. She was open to the idea of airing one on this topic but has to check with the producer. We have looked at a video presentation the San Mateo League did on this topic for the last election. We are also hoping to get a PowerPoint from another Bay area League on this topic and then put together our own presentation. The committee is looking for a League member with experience making PowerPoints who would be willing to assist with this project. If you have this skill and are interested, please contact me at the email below.



**Event materials:** We discussed the need for some give-aways to have at tabling events as well as more League materials such as membership forms, sample newsletters and pamphlets on related subjects.

**Parent Event:** Two of our members staffed a table at McLane High School's Parent **University** night and had a good number of people stopping by to get information about our organization.

[wldtr1951@gmail.com](mailto:wldtr1951@gmail.com)

### NEW MEMBERSHIP DUES AS SET BY NATIONAL LWV

**\$75 RECOMMENDED PER PERSON**

**Minimum of \$20 per person, including at least \$20 per person at same address, as well as students.**

*Please renew promptly when requested.*

## Education

by Kay Bertken



The Fresno County Grand Jury released the result of its investigation into the release of confidential closed-session information by a Fresno Unified board member. That information was subsequently published. No person or media outlet was specifically named in the report.

Subsequent questioning of Fresno Unified trustees and trustees of other county districts found significant ignorance of the California Brown Act, including the consequences of violating its provisions. The report recommended providing ethics and Brown Act training every two years for board members across Fresno County schools as required by AB 2158. Sitting board members have been asked to complete training by December of 2025.

It is budget consideration time, and that topic has been occupying the last FUSD board meetings. Trustees will likely be mindful of the threats to federal funding that come directly from Washington. In 2024-2025, Fresno Unified received \$90 million in Title I and II funds, \$20.9 million for special education, \$66.8 million in childhood nutrition support in addition to \$53 million in the last of the one-time funds from the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief Act that were allocated to deal with the impact of Covid. Including other allotments, Washington has been the source of \$250 million out Fresno's \$1.6 billion budget this year.

Compared to dollar amounts of these programs, the federal cuts announced so far have been important, but minor-- to the fresh fruits and vegetables program and the Migrant families and New Citizens program. So far, as announced in Governor Newsom's May revision of the state budget, PreK-12 education has been saved so far from major cuts that might have been expected from California's own budget shortfalls.

For the first time, some FUSD board meeting budget presentations were organized around the district's adopted goals. Some of the proposed expenditures were new investments for 2025-2026 and some were ongoing investments.

*((continued on page 4))*

## Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



Behavioral Health Board members heard a report from the RAND Corporation on Funding the Service Gap for Adult Outpatient Mental Health Services in California. The report focused only on adults aged 21+ and on treating "specialty" diagnoses such as schizophrenia, psychotic disorders, bipolar disorders, and major depressive disorders.

Currently the total cost to provide adult outpatient mental health care in specialty mental health to 509,600 adults is around \$2.9 billion, annual average per person served of \$5,648. Expanding evidence-based treatment services and including those individuals needing, but not receiving, treatment services would cost \$12.6 billion, annual cost per person served of \$21,166. Increasing the quality of care obviously greatly increases the cost.

Recommendations include: 1) conduct outreach to ensure that all individuals who are eligible for mental health treatment services in the state's behavioral health system receive the needed care; 2) increase the volume and scope of outpatient services to reach alignment with evidence-based care; and 3) increase funding for the mental health system. The last recommendation is most important and least likely to be accomplished without strong advocates for increased state and federal funding.

The Board's Children's Committee received a report from Exodus Crisis Stabilization Center. Exodus provides services 24/7, 365 days. for children and adults who are in crisis. Ideally clients are evaluated, treated, referred, or discharged within 24 hours; if necessary, they may be held longer while awaiting inpatient hospital admission

Inpatient psychiatric health facilities for children include Central Stars in Fresno and River Vista in Madera; if local hospitals are full children are sent to other hospitals throughout the state. Exodus operates a 16-bed inpatient psychiatric hospital for adults, but it usually is full, so clients may be sent to Community Behavioral Health Center (Fresno), River Vista or out of county hospitals. They will be moving from their current location on Cesar Chavez Boulevard to newly remodeled facilities at Millbrook and Shields Avenues.

*((continued on page 7))*



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Webmaster Robin Chiero

## *Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy*

**JOIN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS!**  
*Men and Women age 16 and above Making Democracy Work*

**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 - \$75 is the recommended amount. However you can choose an amount, with \$20 being the least you can pay. Renew online at <https://portal.lwv.org/>**

**Please make your check payable to the US League of Women Voters, Fresno, and send to our local office at LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710. with registration form below**

.....  
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