

LWV[®] The Voter

October 2026

Co-Presidents' Letter

*Come gather 'round people
Wherever you roam
And admit that the waters
Around you have grown
And accept it that soon
You'll be drenched to the bone
If your time to you is worth savin'
And you better start swimmin'
Or you'll sink like a stone
For the times they are a-changin'*

—Bob Dylan, 1964

As we celebrate the 80th anniversary of the League of Women Voters of Chico/Butte County, it's tempting to look with fond nostalgia on the way things used to be. Except that's not possible: way back when the League got started in our communities, the times they were a-changing then as well.

The LWV mission of defending democracy has held firm for one hundred years. Through an enduring commitment to democratic discussion (often tedious), parliamentary procedure (ditto), and the power of votes as voice (very exciting), the League has empowered voters through systematic voter services, including:

- Assistance with voter registration
- Pros and cons of key issues
- Offering well-informed and well-researched positions on key issues
- Forums and less formal events that allow voters to get up close and personal with candidates
- Informative brochures and flyers featuring election issues
- Partnerships with other nonpartisan organizations to reach the broadest audience possible

None of that has changed. Still, some things are very different:

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PO Box 965, Chico, CA 95927

www.lwvbuttecounty.org

(530) 895-VOTE (8683)

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- *Election campaigns:* Partisanship has become a war of one party against the other. After Citizens United, a flood of untraceable funds became invested in campaign advertising and personal attacks, at the same time creating financial barriers to participation for potential candidates.
- *Communication:* The advent of social media and the conflation of news and entertainment in traditional media has transformed how people encounter political news. Online influencers create niche communities through targeted internet messages that ultimately become echo chambers, amplifying divisive material. Meanwhile, economic pressures and competition from digital media have forced the people and companies that produce “analogue media” (e.g., print, traditional broadcast, even direct mail) into the background.
- *Perceptions of the role of government:* Instead of being a nonpartisan resource serving all Americans, changes in campaigns and communication have systematically undermined public perception of the role of government. A [2025 study from the Pew Research Center](#) reports that Americans’ trust in the federal government is at a near all-time low of 17% and has been trending downward since 2001, when the trust level was at 54%.

All this raises a basic question for members of the League of Women Voters. Our mission to empower voters and defend democracy has endured for decades through all kinds of times that have changed. Indeed, today’s challenges make our commitment to this mission more important than ever. We have the social capital—our members, our partners, our allies who trust our fidelity to nonpartisanship. We have programs like those listed above that continue to inform, advocate, and activate democratic processes. And we know how to invest our resources wisely, so that our work is sustainable for the long haul.

What we have benefited from in the past is what we need most today: people of all ages and backgrounds who step up to these challenges and help the League lift up the voices of voters and keep our democracy strong.

Watch the bi-weekly Update for opportunities to “think out loud together” and take action to advance the League’s mission in these changing times.

Janet Rechtman & Nicole Drummond, Co-Presidents

Save the Dates

October 7, 5:30–7:45 p.m.

Paradise Candidate Forums, Paradise Town Hall, 5555 Skyway

October 17, 2026, 10 a.m.

Come to Chico Chai, 1441 Park Avenue, for an **LWV/BC VOTE Make and Take Pop UP!** We will have materials on hand to create yard signs, buttons, and posters. Bring your artsy self, have a chai and a toast, and create something that will encourage early voting!

January 23, 2027, 10 a.m.

Indigent Defense topic. Saint John’s Episcopal Church. The League’s Criminal Justice Committee is organizing an informative program featuring the challenges and opportunities the need for indigent defense raises in our communities. More to come.

February 7, 2027

LWV/BC 80th Anniversary Gala Celebration, information to come.



2026 BALLOT RECOMMENDATIONS

YES on Propositions **1, 2, 3, 4, 5**

NO on Propositions **37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45**

(The League is **NEUTRAL** on Proposition 40.)

Voter Registration Update

We have more than twenty members who have been trained on how to register voters! We educate citizens, distribute information about voting, and register voters at various events and venues, including libraries, retirement homes, CSU and Butte colleges, high schools, Torres and the Jesus Center, etc. We can also register unhoused people with an address (such as a cross street where they can be found) and preregister 16- and 17-year-olds. By accessing information at Vote411 voters can find ballot information. We will be visible throughout this pre-election season. I would like to thank those who have taken the time to be trained, shown up to help, and will continue to educate voters.

—Corky LeTellier

How to Return Your Ballot

The League's Advice

In a nutshell:

- Return your ballot as soon as possible.
- If it's **seven days or fewer before Election Day**, use a [Secure Ballot Drop Box](#) or [Voter Center](#) rather than the mail to return your ballot. In every election, [thousands of mailed-in ballots](#) are rejected because they arrive too late or are postmarked after Election Day.

If you haven't already, sign up now for [Where's My Ballot?](#) You will be notified when your ballot is mailed to you, received by the county, and counted.

The following is adapted from the LWVC Education Fund's [Easy Voter Guide](#):

There are 3 ways to vote: You can choose to mail back your ballot, OR drop it off at a secure location, OR vote in person at a Voter Assistance Center.

1) VOTE BY MAIL

Mail Your Ballot Back Early!

You can fill it in and mail it back as soon as you receive it. No stamp? No problem. You do not need a stamp to mail back your ballot.

Mark your ballot and seal it inside the envelope provided. Follow the directions on the ballot to mark your choices. Check that you are using the return envelope with your name on it. Put your ballot into the envelope and seal. Only one ballot in each envelope.

Sign and date the envelope. Date and sign your name carefully on the back of the envelope using ink.

Return your ballot on time. Mail your ballot back early because it must be postmarked by Election Day, November 3, 2026.

To make sure your ballot arrives on time, send it back at least one week before Election Day.

If you want to mail your ballot close to or on Election Day, ask for a manual postmark from a postal employee inside a United States Post Office.

If you cannot get a postmark, then take your ballot to a Ballot Dropbox or Voter Assistance Center. Locations can be found here: [Secure Ballot Dropbox](#).

2) DROP OFF YOUR BALLOT AT VOTER CENTER OR BALLOT DROPBOX

If you decide to hand in your ballot instead of mailing it, you must drop it off no later than 8 p.m. on Election Day, November 3.

Drop off your ballot at any [Voter Assistance Center](#) or [Secure Ballot Dropbox](#) in Butte County.

3) VOTE IN PERSON

At in-person [Voter Assistance Centers](#) you can:

- Vote in person,
- Vote with an accessible voting machine,
- Drop off your completed ballot.
- Get help and voting materials in multiple languages.

—Satsie Veith

MAKE A PLAN TO VOTE



League Members celebrate the USA's 250th birthday with hundreds of others at Chico's annual 4th of July Parade. (L to R: Sue Griffin, Sue's granddaughter Hannah, Satsie Veith, Nancy Wirtz, Robin Dizard)

Natural Resources Update

The Natural Resources committee has been actively considering possible areas of interest. Suggestions include AI databases and their impact on communities and the need in the north state for water recharge, following up on the panel discussion last January. Please contact Corky LeTellier with any ideas or comments. Thank you. —Corky LeTellier

Welcome to Water Spotlight

The LWVC Water Interest Group, around forty people from all over the state, is producing brief articles on different aspects of California's water issues. We believe these issues demand close attention from all League members and all Californians, especially given the challenges of climate change.

Each Water Spotlight article will be now posted on our LWVC website's [Water Resources](#) tab for easy access. There are five so far. Future articles will be announced as they appear.

Articles posted now:

April 2026 California's Surface Water Development

For a century, Californians have relied on moving inconceivably large amounts of water from where Nature deposited it and storing it behind massive dams until the water was moved. The backup has been to pump it out of the ground, treating that source as inexhaustible and often causing the land to subside. Here's an overview of California surface water development.

May 2026 Protecting the Public Trust: Mono Lake and Beyond

In 1983, the California Supreme Court decided, based on the public trust doctrine, that water levels at Mono Lake must be prevented from falling to a point that would cause the loss of this natural treasure. This doctrine continues to be used as a potent legal tool to protect the environment.

June 2026 Water Rights: From Time Immemorial

Allocating and managing today's precious water resources according to a centuries-old prior appropriation/riparian water-rights system implicates principles of social and environmental justice as well as 21st century hydrologic knowledge. In this month's Water Spotlight we uncover some thorny issues and present-day water availability problems.

August 2026 Advancing Water Equity in CA Requires Continued Commitment

Water equity in California is grounded in the principle that all people have the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water for human consumption, cooking and sanitary purposes regardless of income, race, geography, or other factors. How California is working on actually helping individuals and families is detailed in this article.

September 2026 Restoring and Managing CA's Watersheds

The landscapes of a watershed vary according to size, topography, climate, and human activities. Healthy watersheds sustain healthy aquatic and terrestrial environments by filtering pollutants, directing the movement of water, nutrients, and sediment, and providing water to sustain life.

—Satsie Veith. *Questions? Please contact me via presidentlwvbutte@gmail.com.*

Close up on a Position Criminal Justice

In this regular feature of our newsletter, we focus on League positions which are the guideposts for all of our actions on issues. If members have not studied and come to consensus on an issue, we have no position and no stand on that issue. Issues can be studied and positions adopted at the National, State, and Local League levels.

In the area of criminal justice, LWV California supports measures that will enable the judicial system of the state to provide all citizens adequate access to legal services. We advocate for a criminal justice system that is just, effective, equitable, transparent, and that fosters public trust at all stages, including policing practices, pretrial procedures, sentencing, incarceration, and reentry. To that end, the League specifies the following requirements to achieve these goals:

- **Adequate Staffing:** Ensure there are enough public defenders so that every person accused who cannot afford a lawyer receives proper representation.
- **Equal Justice:** Make sure no one faces discrimination in court because of how much money they have.
- **Training:** Provide regular training for public defenders, prosecutors, and judges on alternatives to locking people up, such as restorative justice and pretrial diversion.
- **Treatment Over Incarceration:** Treat mental health issues and substance use as public health needs rather than crimes, supporting specialty courts like drug treatment programs.

Use this link to see the full text of the [League's positions on Criminal Justice](#)

Save this date

Unlike most California counties, Butte County does not have a traditional, centralized public defender's office. Instead, indigent (low-income) criminal defense is managed through a flat-fee attorney consortium known as the Butte County Public Defenders Consortium. On January 23 from 10 a.m. to 12 noon, the League will facilitate a conversation about indigent defense in Butte County and a deep discussion of whether we would benefit from a Public Defender's Office. January 23, 2027, 9:30 coffee, 10 a.m. program. St. John's Episcopal.

Why I'm Excited to Be on The Board at LWV/BC

Every morning, I spend a good ten minutes deleting emails from politicians and organizations urgently requesting \$25 before midnight. Sometimes it feels as though it's up to me alone to elect the right people, save the planet, and register my vote on everything from Medicare to book bans. I'm exhausted by the weight of the world before 8 a.m.

Occasionally, though, I stop to read an email that feels different—one without sensational pleas like "Please, please, we're begging you," claims in bold of "SHOCKING UPSET," or doomsday warnings like "Say goodbye—it's over!" Just straightforward information and optional ways to make a difference.

That's how I felt about emails from the League of Women Voters (LWV). Rather than selling me something or telling me what to believe, and asking for \$25, LWV offered factual, nonpartisan information. Their emails reminded me that American democracy depends on informed voters, that voting is critical, and that I could help get out the vote.

When my former CSU, Chico, colleague Debra Barger invited me to meet with the League and consider getting involved in communications, I had no idea where it would lead. I'm still discovering what this role entails, but I'm honored to be part of an organization with more than a century of history dedicated to empowering voters and defending democracy.

I believe in the principles that guide our work: Empowerment, Education, and Advocacy, and in the LWV's goal of empowering citizens to shape better communities, locally and worldwide.

And on a personal note, the League helped lay the groundwork for the United Nations. My birthday is on United Nations Day, so it's meant to be.

I'm excited to see where I can contribute.

—Alice Burkart-Roberts



Board member Alice Burkart celebrates United Nations Day, one of the many causes she champions.

LWV/BC Observer Corps

The League of Women Voters Observer Corps continues to attend and observe public council, commission, and board meetings. Observers are a critical source of information and guide to action for the League. Additionally, we are the eyes and ears of the public for the agencies observed. We have many agencies that still need Observers. Some of the open positions are:

- CARD
- BCAG & Air Quality Management District
- Paradise Town Council
- Oroville City Council
- Feather River Recreation & Parks District
- Chico Airport Commission
- Paradise Unified School District

If you have some time and wish to volunteer, please let the League know at presidentlwvbutte@gmail.com

—Jo Anne Kidd

Garden Party with LWVC Executive Director Jenny Farrell

On Sunday, September 20, past League of Women Voters of Butte County (LWV/BC) President Debra Barger hosted a garden party honoring Jenny Farrell, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of California. Jenny is no stranger to Chico, as she has family here.

In a beautiful garden setting, with delicious food and beverages, League members and guests gathered to hear Jenny share an update on the California League's work to advance its priorities and defend voting rights during this pivotal election year.

Understanding the League's Three Levels

Jenny explained that the League of Women Voters is a three-tiered organization, with National, State, and Local Leagues playing distinct but complementary roles.

The national League lobbies Congress; monitors federal policies on voting rights, national elections, and constitutional issues; and develops educational campaigns and voter toolkits.

Our local LWVBC, informs and registers voters, hosts candidate forums and debates, and helps residents understand local ballot issues.

The California League focuses on four primary responsibilities:

- Advocating in Sacramento for legislation and initiatives the League supports.
- Employing lobbyists to represent the League's positions on important state issues.
- Participating in ballot-measure campaigns related to the League's priorities.
- Producing nonpartisan voter education guides in English, Spanish, and three additional languages, available both in print and online.

Jenny emphasized an important distinction: While the League does not support or oppose political parties or candidates, being nonpartisan does not mean remaining silent on voting rights. When elected officials of either party take actions that affect voting rights and democratic institutions, the League speaks out.

Protecting Voting Rights

Jenny discussed the California League's opposition to Proposition 39, which would impose new voter identification requirements, along with the League's involvement in litigation concerning voting rights.

She also addressed the current administration's challenges to voting by mail and proposals for nationwide postal requirements that could affect access to mail-in voting.

Jenny emphasized that the U.S. Constitution assigns states primary responsibility for administering elections and discussed concerns about federal efforts to establish a national voter database.

She highlighted California's election safeguards, including the process known as signature curing. If a signature on a mail-in ballot does not match the signature on file, election officials notify the voter and provide an opportunity to resolve the discrepancy.

This is one more reason to vote early: It allows time to correct a signature issue and ensure your ballot is counted. Voters can see the signature the state has for them on the [California Secretary of State's website](#).



Taking advantage of the good weather in Debra Barger's garden, LWV/California President Jennie Farrell updates League Members about activities at the state level.

Vote with the League

Jenny encouraged attendees to explore the League's Vote with the League voter guides. Available through the LWV/BC and California League websites, these resources include a quick-reference guide and a more detailed analysis of the statewide ballot measures.

The guides examine each proposition, its potential

effects, and the reasoning behind the League's positions. Jenny reviewed the California League's recommendations for the November 3 election (Yes on Props 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; No on Props 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45; and neutral on Proposition 40).

The complete recommendations, including the League's explanations for its positions on each measure, are available on the [LWV California ballot recommendations page](#).

Keep Marching

One of the highlights of the afternoon came when Jenny sang "Keep Marching" from *Suffs*, the Broadway musical about the women's suffrage movement.

The song's message about the generations of women who fought for voting rights and the continuing work required to preserve those gains provided a memorable conclusion to an afternoon of conversation, education and community.

A video of Jenny's full presentation will be available on the LWVBC website.

—Alice Burkhardt

Voters Services Task Force

The LWV/BC board as a whole is exploring how best to deliver Voter Services, a key to the League's mission, while there is not currently a board member assigned to this position.

Through their efforts, the League facilitated a candidates' forum in Paradise on October 7, featuring candidates for Paradise City Council and Paradise Parks and Recreation District. The League also encouraged community members to attend a series of Chico City Council Candidates' Forums organized by Chico Public and Action News Now.

Check the League's [website](#) for easy access to voter education materials, including Pros and Cons in many different languages. Watch the League Updates for information about future voter outreach events.

And, finally, if you are interested in learning more about becoming Director of Voter Services for the League please write presidentlwvbutte@gmail.com.



Youth Engagement in Democracy

Thanks to a grant from the League of Women Voters Education Fund, LWV Butte County is expanding our efforts to engage, educate, and empower younger voters throughout our community.

We have connected with Pleasant Valley, Inspire, and Chico High Schools to support voter education and engagement on their campuses. Each school received materials for National Voter Registration Day, along with VOTE411 resources to help students learn about registration, voting, and what will appear on their ballot. We are also working with Pleasant Valley High School's Seal of Civic Engagement coordinator to explore engaging high school students in voter education activities.

Our youth engagement efforts extend to Chico State, where LWV/BC is a preapproved service organization for students participating in the Dream Act Service Incentive Grant Program. On National Voter Registration Day, students joined other campus civic engagement efforts to help classmates check their voter registration, update addresses, make a voting plan, and access VOTE411 information.

On October 17, we hope to continue this momentum with "Your Voice Matters—Vote!" at Chico Chai, an artsy make-and-take pop-up that brings together college students, young adults, and community members for creativity, sign-making, planning for early voting, and nonpartisan voter engagement.

—Nicole Drummond



80 Years and Counting

Thanks to the Chico *Enterprise Record* for kicking off National Voter Registration Day with a front page [article](#) celebrating the 80th Anniversary of the LWV/BC. Shown here, League members Nicole Drummond and Liz Griffin register voters at Chico's Summertime celebration.

LWV Butte County Hosts “What’s News?” Conversation on Journalism in the North Valley

On Saturday, September 26, 2026, the League of Women Voters of Butte County held its annual Membership Coffee at First Baptist Church in Chico. This year’s program, “What’s News? A Conversation about the Pleasures and Perils of Journalism in a Hyper-Partisan Environment,” brought together three local media professionals for a lively and informative discussion.

Members and guests heard the panelists’ personal stories about what drew them to journalism and gained insight into how news stories are selected, the challenges of maintaining objectivity, coping with difficult experiences, the importance of transparency, and the influence of social media and misinformation. The conversation also highlighted the healthy local news ecosystem we have in Butte County.

Members and guests also had the opportunity to write questions to the panelists and receive answers from each of them.

Missed the event? A video of the full conversation will be available on our website.



The panel at LWV/BC’s fall meeting featured David Little, former editor of the *Chico Enterprise Record* and currently with the North Valley Community Foundation, who served as moderator; Hayley Watts, news director of Action News Now (NBC and CBS affiliates); and Chris Hutton, reporter for the digital news platform *ChicoSol*.

Meet the Candidates Revisited

A few snaps from the League’s well-attended Meet the Candidates session last May at Chico’s Masonic Center.



Opening remarks and introductions from League co-president Nicole Drummond.

Good questions were asked and good answers were given by all candidates. Pictured here is Jamie Johannson running for State Assembly, District 3



Always energetic, Audrey Denney makes her case for a congressional seat.

We Won! California's League helped strengthen voting rights for all Californians. In September, Governor Newsom signed several bills into law to strengthen voting rights. LWVC helped advance these bills as a co-sponsor or major supporter.

2025–2026 Legislative Session

SB 1360



Enshrines stronger language-assistance protections in state law to provide in-language ballots and other materials to limited-English speaking voters. Language to accessing

SIGNED

SB 1164



Protects against vote dilution and voter suppression of communities of color. Gives all Californians a direct path to enforce voting rights in state court.

SIGNED

SB 1414



Creates an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (IRC) for San Bernardino County. IRCs put community voices first and make the redistricting process transparent.

SIGNED

SB 73



Protects California's election infrastructure from unauthorized law enforcement interference with voting technology and voter lists. Strengthens protections against armed personnel at

SIGNED

SB 884



Strengthens protections for voters at polling places from intimidation and interference, as well as protections from electioneering.

SIGNED

AB 1664



Requires local elections officials to notify the Secretary of State and Attorney General of any warrant, subpoena, or active law enforcement investigation of election record systems.

SIGNED

AB 1116



Expands the ability for Californians to complete online voter registration, regardless of whether they have a driver's license or state ID card, as long as they have a number.

VETOED

SB 1420



Empowers voters to understand and use new early voting and in-person vote-by-mail return options, including "Sign, Scan, and Go." Helps voters make use of voter-friendly options to reduce ballot

SIGNED

AB 2604



Requires the state to implement a system that gives all voters access to electronic signature curing, and to make that system available to county registrars.

SIGNED

AB 2599



Requires businesses to disclose their historic ties to slavery, slaveholding, or the slave trade. Begins the necessary work accountability, transparency, and healing.

SIGNED

SB 423



Ensures better access to 911 emergency calls and related records from private immigration detention centers, providing for better public oversight and accountability.

SIGNED

SB 747



Gives California a clear, effective way to seek relief when any government officer violates the US Constitution, reinforcing the principle that *nobody is above the law*.

SIGNED



League of Women Voters of Butte County

P.O. Box
965 Chico,
CA 95927



<https://my.lwv.org/california/butte-county/donate>

- ★ **Renew Your Membership**
- ★ **Donate**
- ★ **Recruit New Members**
- ★ **Volunteer for Board Positions**

2025–26 LWVBC Board Members

Nicole Drummond	Co-President
Janet Rechtman	Co-President
Vacant	1st VP - Voter Service
Christine Ponce	2nd VP - Membership
Alexandra Shand	Treasurer
Victoria Houchin	Secretary
<i>Directors</i>	
Corky LeTellier	Natural Resources
Victoria Houchin	Social Policy
Brandi Aranguren	Countywide Liaison
Alice Burkart	Communications

League of Women Voter of Butte County's Mission

Founded in 1920, the League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages citizens to play an informed and active role in government. At the local, state, and national levels, the League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Any person 16 years or older, male or female, may become a League member.

LWVBC Board meetings are the 2nd Tuesday each month at 5:30 p.m. at the League Office. All League members are welcome to attend and participate.

To contact a Board member, please send your email to presidentlwvbutte@gmail.com, or you may call 530-895-VOTE (8683) to leave a message. Please be sure to provide your name, contact information, and a brief description of what you need.