



Presidents' Letter

Friends,

The League of Women Voters has declared that the United States is in a constitutional crisis, observing,

The foundational principles that have sustained our democracy—checks and balances, the rule of law, free and fair elections—are under direct and sustained threat. In this extraordinary moment, we cannot proceed with business as usual. All Americans—no matter who you voted for in 2024—need to come together, stand united, and fight back to save our democracy. We cannot afford to fail the generations to come.

In response, the League has launched the **Unite and Rise 8.5** initiative, which aims to mobilize 8.5 million voters using the power of voter engagement as a cornerstone of our democracy. [Unite and Rise 8.5](#) will showcase the many ways voters can drive change, including through advocacy, mobilization, civic education, and engagement.

Here in Butte County, we have many opportunities to participate in Unite and Rise 8.5. In October 2020, approximately 70% of the 169,429 eligible Butte County voters were registered, considerably lower than the statewide average of 88% (source: <https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/ror/15day-gen-2020/county.pdf>). In the 2024 general election, 70% of registered voters actually voted and the percent of eligible voters who actually voted was only 56% (source: <https://admin.cdn.sos.ca.gov/elections/sov/2024-general/sov/03-voter-participation-stats-by-county.pdf>) compared to 71% and 59% statewide. Further, in Butte County and statewide, 95% and 80% of ballots were mailed in. These gaps are at once challenges and opportunities for our League to address.

Clearly, we are in a crisis when it comes to the power of the voter in our county, our state, and our country. Calls to end mail-in voting, redistricting for partisan

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goals, and challenges to voter registration demand a response. We must support one another as we encourage those we know to register to vote, to become informed on issues, to join with others in defending our democracy. This issue of the *Voter* includes numerous opportunities for League members to join this critical response. We welcome one and all to the struggle.

Janet Rechtman & Nicole Drummond, Co-Presidents

P.S. Thank you Jane!

From member to communications chair, to chapter president, the League has long benefited from the leadership and hard work of Jane Wanderer. Jane recently retired as the lead on our social media, working to build the League's visibility and celebrate our work. A meticulous graphic designer, Jane has ensured that anything published by LWVBC was consistent with League graphic standards and branding. Jane writes "After many years of managing our League's Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube accounts—since at least 2012—I've decided it's time for me to step down from this role. I need to prioritize my family and personal well-being. Thank you for the opportunity to serve in this capacity. I remain committed to the League and its mission."



Jane leaves big shoes to fill. As we celebrate her contributions, we also are searching for a new lead for LWVBC's social media. Let us know if you are interested at presidentlwvbutte@gmail.com.

In 2019, Jane joined the League in celebrating its centennial anniversary.



Our lead hospitality volunteer, Linda Lunsford is one of our League's unsung heroes. Thank you, Linda, for all you do!

What Does the LWV Observer Corps Do?

You may know that LWVBC Observers serve as the eyes and ears of the League. They attend a wide variety of public boards, councils, and districts in Butte County. Each LWVBC Observer compiles an annual report and presents it to the membership at our Observer Report meeting each year, usually held in late spring. You may not have attended such a meeting, so we are publishing here an entire Observer report for the Chico Unified School District (CUSD) from our dedicated Observer, Helen Gesick. While reports are not lengthy, they reflect many hours spent observing local government in action. It is not rare for a single council or board meeting to last for hours.

One of the newest components to the role of Observer is in response to a request from LWVUS to utilize our collective League power and respond to threats to democracy. To support this effort, a voluntary survey, known as "[Signals](#)" has been developed for League leaders to aid in tracking and documenting incidents that reflect commonly recognized anti-democratic behavior at the local level. As described by LWVUS, the **Signals** survey leverages one of the League's greatest strengths—its presence in communities across the country—to monitor and respond to emerging and unique threats to democracy. We may see local actors learn the wrong lessons from what is happening nationally and attempt to replicate them at home. Especially as local news wanes, the ability of Leagues to listen and hear what is going on in their communities is unique. While concerning behaviors have expanded over recent years, this initiative aims to prioritize reports on new, unusual, or specific incidents that signal shifting democratic norms. As noted in the attached Observer report, no **Signals** activity was observed/reported for the CUSD.

—Debra Barger

A Sample Observer Report from 2025

League of Women Voters of Butte County – Observer Notes/Annual Report

May 10, 2025, Helen Gesick

Chico Unified School Board (www.chicousd.org)—Usually meets twice a month at Marigold School. One meeting is considered a Special Board Meeting-Workshop session where a specific topic requested by the board is reviewed by staff. It is usually a shorter agenda. The Regular Board meeting usually has a long, detailed agenda (normally running well over 3 hours).

Members of the Board

- Teisha Hase—2024-2028 (Trustee Area 3)
- Tom Lando—President, 2018, 2020-2026 (Trustee Area 4)
- Rebecca Konkin—Vice President, 2020-2026 (Trustee Area 1)
- Eileen Robinson—2010, 2014, 2018, 2022-2026 (Trustee Area 5)
- Gayle Olsen—2024-2028 (Trustee Area 2)
- **Superintendent**—Kelley Staley

Format of Meetings after closed session agenda

- Usually starts within 10 minutes of 5:00 or 6:00 pm (depending on meeting type)
- Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance
- Usually a presentation—Students involved in special programs, awards to staff or faculty. Some programs have been, PV report of new Graphic Design/Video Game Computer Science program, Bidwell Jr. Concert Band, Neal Dow Chess Club, Neal Dow Leadership Cheer Group, Chico Jr. Drama program, Citrus Bike program (repair, etc.), CHS and PVHS Link Crews (to help new freshmen students)
- Consent Calendar—Usually has to do with approving field trips, expulsions and reinstatements, possibly new course requests, accounts payable, etc.
- Discussion/Action Calendar—Varied but usually a detailed presentation by teachers or staff on such things as: League of Stars, achievement gaps in CUSD, Charter schools Measure K requests, Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS) including Migrant Education and Homeless students (McKinney Vento), Demographic Analysis, use of AI, cell phone usage, new ethics course requirement for graduation
- Various topics some informational, some requiring a vote of board
- Items from the Floor—Have been 3 minute presentations on antiracism, hate motivating behavior, cell phone policy, parental notice of student requesting gender identifying change. The last Regular Board Meeting saw 8 or 9 speakers from the audience presenting their case against the CUSD and the CUSD board with regards to the recently reactivated lawsuit (*Regina vs. CUSD*) over California school's transgender policy. Many threatened the board and particular board members by name. Two speakers who were apparently scheduled to speak in the closed session were moved to the public session. No comment is made by board members to speakers from the floor.
- Adjournment

Meeting Behavior

- Audience:
 - Engaging in negative personal attacks—by parents, regarding the *Regina* lawsuit.
- Board Members
 - Provide opportunities for public input on agenda items

- Open to different perspectives
- Allow ideas to be expressed, opposed, or clarified
- Provide unscheduled public appearance opportunities before action to be voted on
- Treat others in courteous manner in person
- Provides written behavior directions for public. In detailed agenda provided at meetings or by email.
- Board Chair
 - Follows meeting protocols
 - Maintains control of the meeting
 - Ensure respectful participation by all participants

Signal—No CUSD Board proceedings warranted Signal reporting to LWVUS, unless the *Regina vs. CUSD* case warrants notice.

Observer Recruitment

Our League is recruiting a Director of Observers as well as individual Observers who are willing to share responsibility for attending public meetings in our communities. Here is a preliminary list of local boards—those marked with an asterisk (*) already have Observers on hand.

- Chico Property Based Improvement District (PBID)*
- Chico Unified School District Board*
- Tuscan Water District*
- Chico City Council*
- CARD (Chico Area Recreation District)*
- Butte Behavioral Health Advisory Board*
- Butte County Board of Supervisors*
- BCAG & Air Quality Management District
- Bidwell Park & Playground Commission
- Biggs City Council
- Butte County Board of Supervisors
- Butte-Glenn Community College District
- Butte Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCO)
- Butte Subbasin Groundwater Advisory Board
- Chico Airport Commission
- Chico City Arts Commission
- Chico Council Internal Affairs
- Chico Finance Committee
- Chico Planning Commission
- Durham Recreation and Park District
- Durham Unified School District Board
- Feather River Recreation & Parks District
- Gridley City Council
- Oroville City Council
- Oroville City Elementary School District
- Oroville Union High School District
- Paradise Irrigation District
- Paradise Town Council

- Paradise Unified School District
- South Feather River Water and Power Authority
- Vina Groundwater Sustainability Agency and Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SHAC)

If you would like to learn more or to volunteer to be an Observer, please let us know at presidentlwvbutte@gmail.com. Observer training and the planning meeting for Fall 2025 will be in early September.

Join Our Board — Help Strengthen Democracy in Butte County

The League of Women Voters of Butte County is seeking passionate leaders to join our Board of Directors. We have many leadership opportunities for anyone who is interested, please contact presidentlwvbutte@gmail.com <https://my.lwv.org/california/butte-county>.

We have two key openings: **Observer Director** and **Voter Registration Director**.

The Observer Director leads our Observer Corps, ensuring transparency in local government and keeping the community informed. The Voter Services Director organizes outreach and voter registration efforts, with a special focus on engaging underserved communities.

Both roles are vital to protecting democracy, empowering voters, and fostering civic engagement. If you're ready to make a difference, we'd love to hear from you!

Join LWVBC for Our Fall Coffee

September 20, 2025, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Saint John's Episcopal Church, 2341 Floral Ave., Chico
Potluck Brunch Refreshments Welcome

Our topic is Immigration and Latino/Latina Life in the United States, featuring guest speaker Professor Susan Gordon Green, Professor of Multicultural and Gender Studies at Chico State. Her talk will be particularly timely given the activities of ICE in our communities and the [LWV Position on Immigration](#), shown here in brief:

Promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business and employment needs of the United States; be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises; and provide for student visas. Ensure fair treatment under the law for all persons. In transition to a reformed system, support provisions for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status.

Special Invitation for New Members & Folks who are League-Curious

Come to the meeting at 10 a.m. for a brief orientation to League membership. See you there!

Natural Resources Committee

The Natural Resources committee will hold a preliminary meeting in September or early October to finalize plans for a program focused on water resources, sustainability, and clarifying the roles of various regulatory agencies. The programs will feature three events beginning in January, including a Sunday afternoon roundtable book discussion in March. This year's Book in Common is *California Against the Sea: Visions for Our Vanishing Coastline* by Rosanna Xia, which will be presented by CSU on April 2. If you are interested in joining this group and exploring additional topics, please contact Corky LeTellier at corklet48@gmail.com.



Our League in action at the Good Trouble Lives On march.

Save the Date and Mark Your Calendars!

September 18	https://ccclib.bibliocommons.com/events/68a75362ee7045528b840dfd The Challenges to Voting Rights Then and Now webinar
September 19	National Voter Registration Day #VoteReady
September 20 10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.	<i>Fall Coffee:</i> Speaker: Susan Gordon Green, CSU Chico <i>Where:</i> Saint John's Episcopal Church Meeting Room <i>Topic:</i> Immigration and Latino Community <i>Pre-meeting</i> 10 a.m.: New/prospective member orientation
TBA	League Forum on Redistricting Special Election
October 25 10:30 a.m.–12 noon	Criminal Justice Program. Location to be announced
November 4	Special Election—Redistricting
January–March, 2026 Date/place TBA	Water Program—in coordination with AAUW, Book in Common and/or OLLI
January 22, 2026	Winter Meeting—Details to Come
May 2026	Annual Meeting
June 4, 2026	Election Day, primaries

Chico Townhall Meeting with Rep. Doug LaMalfa, Observations

The old saying is “Be careful what you wish for” since unintended consequences may be the result. Well, Chico has been wishing for a Townhall meeting with Representative Doug LaMalfa for the last eight years and while the intended consequences were welcome, there were several unintended outcomes as well.

National and local news media kept with the rule “if it bleeds it leads,” featuring the rude and disrespectful behavior of a handful of the nearly 1,000 folks in attendance. By calling attention to disruptions in Mr. LaMalfa’s ritualistic opening, with a prayer, the Pledge of Allegiance, and veterans presenting the flag (which was already present onstage), these news angles ironically reinforced the importance of town-hall meetings in our democracy. Of course we should be respectful about the symbols of our nation. We only wish Mr. LaMalfa had invested less time in this effort, since it took up 15 minutes of the 90-minute session.

Thanks to League members who were present who shared their reflections on the experience. Here’s what some folks had to say (*The views expressed below are those of the individuals only and do not speak for the positions of the LWVBC or its parent organizations*):

I was very pleased that some 1,200 people showed up and most were trying to hear his responses although there were a few stupid ones who yelled out various nonproductive comments. It stood out for me when he said that “VA funding has not been cut.” And “There were no cuts to MediCal,” since I wasn’t sure if these were correct. He did not answer questions about the January 7 pardons and blamed Hamas and Hezbollah for the mowing down of Palestinians.

Several people congratulated him for showing up but most were quite negative. There seemed to me many disabled veterans who were skeptical of the VA’s help and one very positive comment. I think that the takeaway is that if constituents can be mostly respectful, we may actually hear more from him.

I had heard there were 600 chairs and so doubled that number with all the people standing. Also, the reports make it sound more contentious than it was ... focusing on the negative. —Corky LeTellier

Considering people’s huge level of anger and frustration, I felt the crowd was remarkably civil. This is what Good Trouble looks like. Does Mr. LaMalfa actually think his constituents should calmly and quietly accept

the dismantling of our democracy! The public put forth many pertinent comments and questions. The comments were more effective since Mr. LaMalfa’s answers to questions were misleading, rambling, and flat-out wrong. We don’t need to listen to LaMalfa, he needs to listen to us! —Suzanne Toaspern-Holm

Mr. LaMalfa certainly had courage to hold this meeting, but it was VERY DIFFICULT to hear anything!! I was very disappointed that most everyone only wanted to swear and yell. It accomplishes NOTHING! We need to have a list of items that our community supports and needs. The message to Mr. LaMalfa (and his compatriots) is he owes his allegiance to his constituents, not the president. If he does not agree, we vote him out! That is our democratic system that is under threat now. Everyone needs to inform themselves (read the “beautiful” bill—Google is your friend) then VOTE. —Lynn McEnespy

The turnout for the meeting was wonderful, so many of the people there are concerned about our democracy. I was disappointed in the behavior of some attendees though, the yelling and booing drowned out what LaMalfa was saying. I want to hear him, even though I don’t agree with him, I need to hear his words and take note of the falseness. The disruption overran the comments too, and they were so important when people spoke about the losses and damage to our local citizens because of legislation signed by LaMalfa. I left early because I just wasn’t able to hear the speakers. If we the public demand our representatives have public meetings, we as the public need to listen to what they have to say. —Lois Olson

In marketing, “pent-up demand” refers to a spike in calls for products or services after consumers have been deprived for some time due to economic conditions, shortages, and other constraints on access. This townhall was clearly an expression of pent-up demand by Mr. LaMalfa’s constituents, largely due to pressing economic concerns, a shortage of communication, and limited access for the last eight years. Perhaps Chico City Council member Katey Hawley said it best when she offered, “The less frequently you show up and have townhalls like this, I believe that the harder it will be to facilitate effective conversations.”

While rudeness may be the unintended consequence of such a long gap between townhalls, the intended consequence was absolutely fulfilled when members of the public could speak to Mr. LaMalfa and hear his response to constituent concerns.

—Janet Rechtman



League of Women Voters of Butte County

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<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
Lisa Cooperman	1st VP - Voter Service
Marcia Moore	2nd VP - Membership
Alexandra Shand	Treasurer
Victoria Houchin	Secretary
Corky LeTellier	Director Natural Resources

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.