

# THE VOTER

October 2025

Empowering Voters - Defending Democracy

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## A Message from LWVML Presidential Triad —

*Maria Benech, Jane Braga, and Leonides Russell*

In 1848, a group of women gathered in Seneca Falls, New York. It was the first meeting of its kind. The focus was on equal rights for women. The most radical of its demands was that a woman should have the right to vote. This was the beginning of an organized movement for women. In 1920, the 19th Amendment was signed into law. Women gained the right to vote. However, states across the South and Southwest required literacy tests and poll taxes for women of color. For them, this made voting almost impossible. As late as 1962, Native American women were

prevented from voting in some states. Those states claimed that living on a reservation did not constitute residency in that state.

In 1965, the Voting Rights Act eliminated discriminatory voting practices like literacy tests and poll taxes. Women of color were more free to access to the polling booths, and they turned out in record numbers.

Incredibly, once again, voting rights for women are up for debate here in the United States. The Save America Voting Eligibility Act (SAVE Act), if passed, will require that a married woman's legal married name be the same as the name on her birth certificate to register to vote. This is almost certainly impossible since most women do not marry a man with the same last name as hers. Recently, some Christian nationalists have suggested that women should no longer be allowed to vote as individuals. They advocate that there should only be one vote per household and that the vote, of course, would be cast by the male head of household.

We seem to have come full circle to the days before the 1848 meeting in Seneca Falls. A woman's right to vote is in danger of being limited, not by poll taxes or literacy tests, but by the SAVE Act and by organizations and movements that do not believe in equal rights for women.

We must be just as determined and dedicated as the women who met in Seneca Falls. We must continue to fight for our rights. We must make our voices heard by writing and calling our congressional representatives. And we must vote!



Leo, Jane, and Maria at the "Mrs. Whitman's Words for Women" LWVML fundraiser on September 25<sup>th</sup>.

*Maria, Jane, and Leonides*

# The League of Women Voters of California will **NOT** take a position on Proposition 50.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – August 27, 2025

## **The League of Women Voters of California will not take a position on Proposition 50.**

This statement explains our stance, provides context for it, and shifts the focus to empowering California voters.

Early in the process, before the ballot language was written, we, along with several other good government groups, issued independent statements opposing mid-cycle redistricting. **This was consistent with the League's long-standing positions at both the state and national level.** Since then, and on the heels of Texas' decision, California Governor Newsom and the legislature moved forward to do mid-cycle redistricting. Now, the ballot measure language has been finalized. While the process for the redistricting in California differs from what is happening in Texas, the California League recognizes the importance of staying aligned with our national League and with state and local Leagues, such as in Texas, that are, or may soon be, in court challenging unfair maps.

**With all of these factors in mind, we have decided not to take a position on Proposition 50.**

On the proposed maps themselves, our policy is clear: **the people most affected by district maps, especially communities of color who are often underrepresented, should be the ones to decide if those maps are fair.** Many of our partners in Latino, AAPI, and Black communities are still reviewing the California map and forming their positions. We will defer to them to share their conclusions.

The League of Women Voters of California is a nonpartisan organization. **Every day we fight in the courts and in the legislature to protect Californians from President Trump's authoritarian actions that threaten the rights and freedoms of all Americans.** Our record on this is public and clear.

The League of Women Voters of California has always spoken truth, fought voter suppression, and stood in community for racial justice and democracy. We are a scrappy, grassroots, fire-fueled movement that will not allow democracy to be stolen. **Donald Trump is using common tactics of an aspiring dictator: divide opposition, pit people against each other, and sow distrust.** A well-worn tactic in that playbook is scapegoating, often by fueling anger and violence toward women. In recent weeks, the LWVC has received thousands of misogynistic, hate-filled emails. The League was forged in struggle, and we will not allow ourselves to be used as a scapegoat.

**Authoritarianism is the enemy, not the League of Women Voters of California.**

**Now it is time for the voters to decide.** Special elections often see low and unrepresentative turnout. The League of Women Voters of California Education Fund will work to ensure that the full diversity of California voters participate in the November 4, 2025 election, and that every voter has access to the non-partisan, in-language, and factual information they need to cast an informed vote.

**Do not let partisan politics divide us. Now more than ever, we must stand together. And now more than ever, California voters need the League.**

**Saturday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 10 am to noon**

## General Meeting— Tuolumne County Library, 480 Greenley Road, Sonora

Tim Kuhn, a Yosemite Park Ranger and one of the Project Managers for the Ackerson Meadow Restoration Project, will be our speaker. He will discuss Ackerson Meadow, its history, restoration, current status, the return of flora and fauna to the area, and future restoration projects. It should be a fascinating, informative morning!

## October and November Meetings/Events

### Wednesday October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1 pm to 3 pm

**Membership Committee** — Patricia Horsthius, Chair  
Sonora Senior Center (Room B)

### Tuesday October 14<sup>th</sup>, 4:30 pm

**Fire Interest Group**—Maria Benech, Lead  
Karen Caldwell's Home

### Saturday October 18<sup>th</sup>, noon to 3 pm

### **No Kings 2 Rally**

Courthouse Park in Downtown Sonora

### Monday October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1 pm to 3 pm

**Voter Services** — Susan Medeiros, Chair  
Sonora Senior Center

### Wednesday October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 11 am

**Water Interest Group**—Jane Braga, Lead  
Sonora Senior Center

### Wednesday October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

**Observer Corps** — Jane Braga, Chair  
Senior Center in Sonora

### Monday October 27<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 am to 2:30 pm

**LWVML Board Meeting**  
Sonora Senior Center

### Saturday November 1<sup>st</sup>, 10:30 am to 12:30 pm

### **General Meeting**

Murphys Branch Library in Murphys

### Saturday November 1<sup>st</sup>, 10:30 am to 12:30 pm

**Firewise Calaveras Festival (FREE EVENT) -**  
**LWVML will have a booth there too.**

Angels Camp Fairgrounds

### Tuesday November 11<sup>th</sup>, 4:30 pm

**Fire Interest Group**—Maria Benech, Lead  
Karen Caldwell's Home

### Wednesday November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1 pm to 3 pm

**Membership Committee** — Patricia Horsthius, Chair  
Sonora Senior Center (Room B)

### Monday November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1 pm to 3 pm

**Voter Services** — Susan Medeiros, Chair  
Sonora Senior Center

### No Meeting in November

**Water Interest Group**—Jane Braga, Lead  
Sonora Senior Center

### Monday December 1<sup>st</sup>, 11:30 am to 2:30 pm

**LWVML Board Meeting**  
Sonora Senior Center

### Wednesday December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

**Observer Corps** — Jane Braga, Chair  
Senior Center in Sonora

## Tell Your Senators to Oppose the SAVE Act

The House of Representatives passed the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act for the second time in April 2025. The SAVE Act would require citizenship documentation to register to vote even though voters in every state are already required to affirm or verify their citizenship status when registering.

Now, the Senate must reject this bill to prevent it from becoming law.

It is already illegal for noncitizens to register and vote in federal or state elections. The bill's requirement of a document to prove American citizenship to register to vote in federal elections is unnecessary and seeks to divide us. It also creates another barrier to voting.

Many communities of eligible voters would be unnecessarily burdened by the requirements of the SAVE Act. Among them are military voters who would be required to present documentation every time they re-register to vote when their families move. Families who have been impacted by natural disasters may have lost necessary documentation and would be required to jump through hoops to replace these documents to register to vote while also going through the traumatic process of rebuilding their lives. Additionally, Americans who have changed their names, like married women, would also be required to secure updated documentation to register to vote.

Americans do not need MORE obstacles to vote. The SAVE Act would create one more barrier to the voting process, as many eligible voters do not have easy access to the necessary documents. Compared to white US citizens, citizens of color are three times more likely to lack documents such as birth certificates, passports, naturalization certificates, or certificates of citizenship or face difficulties accessing them. For example, while approximately half of all American adults possess a passport, two-thirds of Black Americans do not. [Tell your Senators to oppose the SAVE Act.](#)

**Senator Adam Schiff—(202) 224-3841**

**Senator Alex Padilla—(202) 224-3553**

The 28<sup>th</sup> amendment was ratified and Congress has not acted to make it part of the Constitution. Add your name to demand Equal Rights for women at <https://www.lwv.org/take-action/add-your-name-demand-equal-rights>.

Are you keeping up with what's available online from LWVC and LWVUS.? If you don't have an account through MyLo, you should.

Go to [my.lwv.org](https://my.lwv.org). Create an account, and you'll have access to both state and national information, including all the positions, legislation, changes, etc. The state League site is a little behind on some issues, but the Program Planning Kit is there, and the legislative advocacy report from 2024 is also there. If you have some time, explore them both.

Thank you to those who have already done this and are keeping informed and up-to-date.



## SUCCESS, JOY, AND CELEBRATION AT OUR FUNDRAISING EVENT!

Excited conversations, crowds inside and out, and enthusiasm reigned at our fundraising event on Thursday evening, September 25<sup>th</sup>, at Murphys Creek Theatre. Many members, friends, and family were dressed in red, white, or blue, vintage wear, or semi-casual wear to gather and enjoy each other in support of our local League of Women Voters. An hour-long reception from 6 to 7 pm was followed by the play, "Mrs. Whitman's Words for Women," an award-winning and world premiere play set in 1918, about young college women who discuss women's inequality and struggles at that time. The message of the play, 107 years later, is still relevant today and supports the equal rights mission of the League of Women Voters. The play was the perfect event for our League fundraiser!

We want to thank everyone who gave their time, energy, effort, and heart and soul into helping our fundraiser be a great success! Honestly, we could not have done it without every one of you!

A special "thank you" goes out to Brenda McHenry for producing and distributing tickets! Ninety-two tickets were sold and \$2,370 was raised. Thanks to all who contributed behind the scenes! The event would not have happened without our "village" coming together.

A HUGE "thank you" goes out to Mountain Bookshop for selling tickets for this event. Another HUGE "thank you" goes out to Murphys Creek Theatre for partnering with us and allowing us to host their preview night of this amazing play.

Deborah Rei, Fundraiser Chair & Patricia Horsthuis, Co-Chair





# Mrs. Whitman's Words For Women

## WOW!!!

If you were unable to attend our wonderful fundraiser last week, I highly recommend that you see this amazing play. It is poignant, funny, and oh, so timely. The acting was excellent (and we saw the dress rehearsal), and the theater is wonderful. Don't miss it.

### From Jodi Vaccaro, director of Mrs. Whitman's Words For Women

When Mrs. Whitman's Words for Women won our 2024 Quill to Act New Play Festival, the talkback was passionate. A year later, the play feels even more urgent. In 2025 – when women's equality and autonomy remain contested, when access to reproductive healthcare is restricted in many places, and when books by and about women are being challenged in classrooms and libraries—keeping women's voices onstage matters. It's also why MCT invests in new work and new playwrights.

Though set in 1918, these characters feel familiar. Their struggles to choose their own futures and resist being defined by expectation echo in my life and in the lives of so many women I know. Grace, Ida, and Lillian remind me of my girlfriends—the way we encourage one another to “determine your own path, every single day, and your time will be spent as you like it.” At any age whether it's advocating for birth control, choosing a career, or simply asking, “Who says I want to fit?” these acts of self-determination matter.

Progress is rarely a straight line—one step forward, sometimes two back, then forward again. This play insists that in sisterhood, in solidarity, and in daring to act differently, change becomes possible. I hope you'll join us for this year's Quill to Act staged readings and add your voice to the conversation.



## Updates from LWVUS

LWVUS is joining [No Kings 2](#) as a national partner on Saturday, October 18<sup>th</sup>. **LWVUS has decided to become an official partner** for this day of mobilization to stand in solidarity with partners and stand up against hate and authoritarianism. I'll be attending a No Kings event in my own community. The League has consistently and boldly spoken up in the face of rising authoritarianism. This is an opportunity to put words into action and show up in defense of democracy and as an effective ally. **We encourage Leagues to lean in locally** and participate in activations with partners on the ground in a nonpartisan manner. We understand that we cannot control how other partners show up, and participating in any event comes with some risk. For Leagues who decide to mobilize for No Kings, please utilize our [Protest Safety Guidance](#) and ["How to Organize a Rally in 8 Steps"](#) resource on the League Management Site. If representing the League or wearing LWV shirts (which we encourage), please use good judgment when creating signs and participating in nonpartisan chants. The national staff will have additional guidance in the weeks ahead.

As we activate around several civic holidays this season, **let's also celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month**, which began earlier this week on September 15<sup>th</sup>. LWVUS will be sharing social media content and a blog uplifting the contributions of Hispanic and Latino Americans in the coming weeks, so stay tuned!

In League,



Dianna Wynn, President, League of Women Voters of the US

# Help Wanted

## Hospitality (General Meeting Greeter)

We are looking for someone to check each person as they arrive and give them their name badges. This person will also welcome all guests and ensure they sign in to allow us to keep in contact with them. Contact Leonides Russell at [leonidesrussell@gmail.com](mailto:leonidesrussell@gmail.com).

This position is not a Board Member and is not required to attend any other meetings.

## Voter Registration Lead

After many years of dedicated service, Pam Vlach is stepping down from this critical position. Thank you, Pam, for your leadership and hard work to make this such a successful part of our League's work.

If you are passionate about voter registration and ensuring voters are getting correct and non-biased information, this is the job for you. This position coordinates volunteers to ensure LWVML has a presence at numerous events and locations to provide this important service. You don't have to go to all the events yourself, but you would be overseeing the work and making sure those doing it are trained and comfortable with this important job. Please contact Susan Medeiros at 209-840-2066 if you are interested.



## Committees, ~~WHERE THE REAL WORK OF THE LEAGUE HAPPENS!~~

### Voter Services Committee:

- Tuesday, November 4<sup>th</sup> is Election Day! California is holding a Special Election regarding Proposition 50. The voters will decide whether to allow the state to carry out temporary redistricting of our state's Congressional District Map.
- Although the League of Women Voters of California is not taking a position on Proposition 50, it is providing information about it in a clear, concise manner through its [Easy Voter Guide](#) (EVG). Along with a brief overview, it offers the "pros and cons" of this proposal.
- Go to [easyvoterguide.org](https://easyvoterguide.org) for the online format. It is available now!
- Voter Services has ordered the Easy Voter Guide in hard copy (English and Spanish versions) to be distributed to various locations in both Tuolumne and Calaveras Counties. We should receive the EVG in the mail between October 1<sup>st</sup> and October 6<sup>th</sup>. If you need a hard copy or if you are willing to distribute copies to designated locations, please contact Susan Medeiros at 209-840-2066.
- Ballots will be arriving by mail the week of October 6<sup>th</sup>. You can easily submit your ballot by mail (no postage required), or you can place your ballot in a Calaveras or Tuolumne County Elections Drop Box. Your Elections Office has box location information.
- Voter Information/Voter Registration Activities:
  - ◆ On September 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, we successfully collaborated with Columbia College to celebrate Voter Registration Day & Constitution Day. Our League volunteers assisted 13 students with voter registration and provided 42 students with voter information. We offered two political science classes information about our League, as well as voter information. Students may be starting a Civic Club on campus & opportunities lie ahead.
  - ◆ Pam Vlach and Leonides Russell met with Tuolumne County Sheriff David Vasquez to discuss how we might provide voter information to qualified inmates at the jail. The sheriff was in agreement that this would be beneficial. An information session is being planned for early October. Easy Voter Guides will be provided.
  - ◆ Voter Services plans to distribute hard copies of the Easy Voter Guide to locations in both counties, including libraries, senior centers, the Jamestown Family Resource Center, the county jail, and Columbia College.



Please contact Susan Medeiros at 209-840-2066 if you are interested in serving on the Voter Services Committee or in taking the lead of Voter Registration/Information.



## Committees continued

### Observer Corps:

#### Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors (BOS)

**9/15. Special Meeting.** Supervisor Campbell began the meeting with a moment of silence for Charlie Kirk, the Congresswoman, and her husband, who had been killed earlier, and all victims of gun violence. TC Fire Department presented a report. The Board gave direction to maintain the current level of service. The board held a lengthy discussion on the development of the FY 2025-2026 Adopted Budget.

**9/16. Special Meeting.** Twelve audience members spoke during Public Comment honoring Charlie Kirk. Comments included: this is "God vs Satan." "He was killed because he loved the Lord." Two spoke with concern about some of Mr. Kirk's positions. Supervisors Brandon, Griefer, and Kirk each spoke about trying harder to listen respectfully to those with whom we disagree and to refrain from name-calling. Former Supervisor Randy Hanfeldt spoke, asking the Board to adopt a resolution condemning gun violence in our community.

**9/23.** Postponed for the next meeting.

#### Sonora City Council

**9/2.** This meeting was adjourned early due to fires. Agenda items moved to 9/15 meeting.

**9/15.** During Public Comment, former Tuolumne County Board Supervisor Randy Hanfeldt spoke, requesting the Council to adopt a resolution condemning gun violence in our community. Councilmember Plummer spoke, saying that we have to move away from the "language of hate." He further stated that we all need to be more cautious and learn to be respectful when we disagree with others. Mayor Segerstrom asked Councilmembers Plummer and Merrill to work together on a resolution.

The new city of Sonora Fire Chief, Brittan Gregory, was introduced. He is a Summerville High School graduate. He has an AA degree in Fire Science. The entire Sonora fire department came to watch.

California Waste Recovery Systems will begin as the city's new waste recovery services provider on November 1<sup>st</sup>. Green waste will be added. 90% of the revenue generated from the sale of all recyclables collected within the city will be returned to the city. The Council voted to create a special General Fund line item for these funds.

SCC voted, 5-0, to allow Alcohol Vendors at the Farmers Market. Sonora Farmers Market is certified organic. All vendors must be certified organic. Alcohol vendors will be subject to ABC regulations, which allow tastings only; the area must be cordoned off, all customers must be age 21 or over to be allowed into the area, and servings can be only 3 oz. Sonora Police will monitor the area.

#### Tuolumne Utility District (TUD)

Gibbs Ranch tank project has been completed.

The board approved an amendment for services to the Preliminary Stage of the Sierra Pines Regional Water Treatment Facility Project.

Next OC meeting is Wednesday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, at 1:30 at the Sonora Senior Center. All are welcome to attend. Contact Jane Braga at [jbraga49@gmail.com](mailto:jbraga49@gmail.com) or 209-768-3842 for more information.

## Homelessness Interest Group (HIG)

The HIGs are resuming regular meetings, beginning on Monday, September 29<sup>th</sup>.

If you are interested in joining the group, please email Leo Russell at [leonidesrussell@gmail.com](mailto:leonidesrussell@gmail.com). The group wants to begin follow-up actions based on the Homelessness Study, which LWVML completed in 2023.

## Water Interest Group (WIG)

We are excited about the October 4<sup>th</sup> General Membership Meeting. Tim Kuhn, a Yosemite Park Ranger and one of the Project Managers for the Ackerson Meadow Restoration Project, will be our speaker. He will discuss Ackerson Meadow, its history, restoration, current status, the return of flora and fauna to the area, and future restoration projects. It should be a fascinating, informative morning!

On Wednesday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, the WIGs will sponsor a field trip to the West Side Dam. The Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians restored the dam and the surrounding area, reintroducing native plants to create habitat for wildlife. We will have a guide from the tribe. More information will be provided at the October General Membership meeting.

WIGs meet on the fourth Wednesday of the month at Schnoogs, 11:30 am.

## Fire Interest Group (FIG)

The FIGs continue to plan for the "Living with Fire Series" in partnership with the Tuolumne Fire Safe Council (TFSC). The series is planned for March 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup>. Each day will build on the story of Wildfire in our County and how we can learn to live with fire while reducing risk to life and property. Each day can also stand on its own. Plans are moving forward for films, discussions, speakers, and interactive exercises.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, at 4:30 pm at Karen Caldwell's home.



**GET A JUMP ON HOME DEFENSE!**

**save the date**  
**SATURDAY**  
**NOVEMBER 1**  
**2025**

FROGTOWN, USA - Angels Camp Fairgrounds  
2465 Gun Club Road ♦ Angels Camp CA

**Key Highlights:**

- demonstrations
- exhibits
- information tables
- insurance information
- kids' activities

**FREE**

**WANT TO BE AN EXHIBITOR/VENDOR?**  
CONTACT: [firewise@calaverasRCD.org](mailto:firewise@calaverasRCD.org)

**FIREWISE CALAVERAS FESTIVAL**

HOSTED BY CALAVERAS COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
[www.CalaverasRCD.org/firewise](http://www.CalaverasRCD.org/firewise)

## September LWVML Board Decisions

- ♦ The time of the Board meetings will change to 11:30 am to 2:30 pm starting in October to accommodate all our members. We will also start meeting at the Sonora Senior Center.
- ♦ Clarified that the price of the ticket for the play/fundraiser is tax deductible. We all agreed this information needs to be on all of our correspondence and handouts and event information.
- ♦ Karen Caldwell was given the go-ahead to price a banner (standing vertical type) for us. We are focusing on more visibility.
- ♦ Karen is also designing note cards for us too so we can send out thank you cards and other correspondence with official stationery.
- ♦ We want to work on more visibility in the community. Ideas are adding our meeting information to the "Community" Section of the Union Democrat and trying to get into the Weekender Calendar. We want to look into the Groveland "newspaper" too.

## How You Can Renew/Join

Renew/join today online at [LWV.org](http://LWV.org). Your dues support national, state, and local League efforts. When you go to the website, you will see the "Join LWV" button in the top right corner of your screen. Remember to identify our local league, League of Women Voters of the Mother Lode. This ensures you remain on our mailing list, or if you are a new member, you will receive our monthly newsletter and other important messages (not too many, though).

**We are a 501(c)3 organization, and all donations are tax deductible. Tax ID #873922182.**



## League Cheer

Do you know another member who is:

- Ill or suffered the loss of a loved one;
- Celebrating an important accomplishment?

Call or text Augusta Parrington at 209.770.0211 or email her at [aparrington13@gmail.com](mailto:aparrington13@gmail.com) to ask her to send out a Care Card.

## LWVML 2025/2026 BOARD OFFICERS:

Presidential Triad — **Maria Benech, Jane Braga**  
**Leonides Russell**  
Vice President - **Karen Caldwell**  
Treasurer — **Suzanne Hennessy**  
Recording Secretary — **Janis Ossa**  
Program Director—**Brenda McHenry**

Action Director—**Leonides Russell**  
Publicity Director - **Stefani Reichle**  
The Voter Editor—**Maria Benech**  
Membership Director - **Patricia Horsthuis**  
Voter Services Director—**Susan Medeiros**  
Observer Corp Director - **Jane Braga**  
Fundraising Director—**Deborah Rei**

**LWVML 2025/2026 Off Board Positions:** Corresponding Secretary — **Dorene Hensler**; Nominating Committee Chair - **Leslie Klay**; Nominating Committee Members - **Maureen Kelley** and **Charlene Dambacher**; Historians - **Leslie and Jeff Klay**; Hospitality— **TBD**; Webmaster—**Dorene Hensler**