

THE VOTER

August 2026

Empowering Voters - Defending Democracy

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A Message from the LWVML Presidential Triad

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

No, it isn't 2027 yet. Our League year ends on June 30th. The New Year begins July 1st.

Our 2026-2027 LWVML year has just begun!

In July, our League Board met in Murphys for a full-day retreat to plan for the upcoming year. To make our General Meetings more relevant, the Board decided that they will be held on a semi-regular basis, not every month. The plan is for meeting topics to be more timely and more important to members and the public alike.

Our first General Meeting of the New Year is Saturday, August 1st. The theme will be "LWVML! Who are We? What Do We Really Do?" Beat the heat and join us for lemonade, iced tea, cookies, and fruit as we discuss our role in the community and plan for the upcoming Election Season! With candidate forums, voter education and registration, Pros and Cons, and Vote411, we have a lot to do this fall! There is a place for everyone. Join the planning and sign up to help!

"What the Constitution Means to Me" is our August 6th fundraiser. Once again, we are partnering with Murphys Creek Theater for a fun, fascinating evening. Starting at 6 pm, we will offer savory and sweet treats as we host the dress rehearsal of this timely play. Don't have your tickets yet? Go to Mountain Bookshop in the Junction, Sonora, or contact Brenda McHenry at 209-785-9239 or bmchenry220@caltel.com.

We will not have a General Meeting in September. September will be Candidate Forum month. We will be holding forums in Tuolumne and Calaveras counties. The enthusiastic participation of our members as ushers, greeters, etc. is crucial to the success of these events.

As part of our mission to empower voters, our Saturday, October 3rd, General Meeting will be a presentation of Pros and Cons. Our Pros and Cons team prepares diligently for this. We present unbiased, nonpartisan information about the propositions and measures on the November 3rd ballot.

"Defending a Democracy Under Siege" is our LWVUS overarching program for 2026-2028. The League strongly denounced President Trump's fake claims about election security in his July 16th National Address. Unite and Rise 8.5 is LWV's strategy to fight back against the anti-democratic actions of the current administration.

LWV California has sponsored Voting Rights legislation to fight against attempts at voter suppression, to add extra protections against intimidation at polling places, and to make voting methods more accessible.

At our August meeting, we will be planning for our LWVML election season. **Our mission – Protect Democracy and Empower Voters**- could not be more relevant! See you on August 1st!

Jare Braga, Leonides Russell, and Maria Benech

DO YOU HAVE YOUR TICKET?

LWVML is hosting the preview night for the Murphys Creek Theatre's production of "What the Constitution Means to Me." [Please help us sell tickets to this fun and poignant event.](#)

Heidi Schreck, the playwright and main character, performs some scenes as her modern self and others as her 15-year-old self. The play premiered in 2017 and was a finalist for the 2019 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Schreck funded her entire college education with these debates. The play's themes include immigration and domestic violence as they relate to women in her family. She also dives into the 14th Amendment, describing the pitfalls of the Constitution and discussing citizenship rights and what it means to be an American.

[We are looking for volunteers to help](#)

[set up and take down at the event, bring a sweet or savory appetizer to the reception, and, of course, to sell tickets.](#) If you are interested, contact Patricia Horstius at 209-559-5242.

Fundraiser **LWV** LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®]
OF THE MOTHER LODE

*What the Constitution Means
to Me* *Thursday,*
August 6, 2026

Pulitzer Prize Finalist

...a thought-provoking play by Heidi Schreck that explores the profound impact of the U.S. Constitution on the lives of individuals, particularly women.



Murphys Creek Theater **6:00-7:00 Reception**
580 S. Algiers St., Murphys, CA **7:00-9:00 Performance**

TICKETS \$25 available at MOUNTAIN BOOKSTORE
or contact Brenda at BMCHENRY209@GMAIL.COM

The 28th 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>.

Saturday, August 1st, 10 am to Noon

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

We will be kicking off the upcoming election season. Join us for a brief presentation on the 2026 National Convention, an inspirational speech on the Voting Rights Act, and learn how you can make the most difference this election season here in Calaveras and Tuolumne counties.

We are looking for volunteers for Voter Registration and Education booths, Candidate Forums, VOTE411 information gathering and input, and Observer Corps members who can help us continue to monitor our local elected officials. Of course, we will have snacks too. Hope to see you there!

August & September Meetings and Events

Thursday August 6th, 6 pm to 9 pm

LWVML Fundraiser—"What the Constitution Means to Me" - For tickets, contact BMcHenry209@gmail.com or go to the Mountain Bookshop in Sonora

Murphys Creek Theatre

August 12th, 1 pm

Membership/Fundraising — Patricia Horsthuis
Chair/Deborah Rei Chair
Senior Center in Sonora

Monday August 17th, 1 pm to 3 pm

Voter Services — Susan Medeiros, Chair
Jane Braga's Home

Friday August 21st, 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

Democracy Interest Group—Martha Rubin, Lead
Starbucks in Angels Camp

Monday August 24th, 11 am to 1 pm

LWVML Board
Senior Center in Sonora

Wednesday August 26th, 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

Observer Corps — Jane Braga, Chair
Senior Center in Sonora

Water Interest Group— No Meeting in August

No General Meeting in September

Tuesday September 8th, 2 pm

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

Wednesday September 9th, 1 pm

Membership — Patricia Horsthuis Chair
Senior Center in Sonora

Wednesday September 16th, 11:30 am

Water Interest Group—Jane Braga, Lead
Schnoogs

Friday September 18th, 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

Democracy Interest Group—Martha Rubin, Lead
Starbucks in Angels Camp

Monday September 21st, 1 pm to 3 pm

Voter Services — Susan Medeiros, Chair
Jane Braga's Home

Monday September 28th, 11 am to 1 pm

LWVML Board
Senior Center in Sonora

Wednesday September 30th, 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

Observer Corps — Jane Braga, Chair
Senior Center in Sonora

Homelessness Interest Group—On hiatus

Committees and Interest Groups, **WHERE THE REAL WORK HAPPENS!**

Voter Services Committee:

Committee Members: Leonides Russell, Pam Vlach, Maria Benech, Cris Barsanti, Jane Braga, and Susan Medeiros (Chair)

Voter Services is starting to organize many activities related to the November 3rd Election. There is much to do, and we cannot do it without the amazing help of our LWVML members. Voter Services

is simply the organizing body, but our members are the “engine” that gives the League the power to steam ahead toward our goals of supporting voters. We need you! We provide training for all of the various voter services activities.



What are our upcoming needs?

- Volunteers to meet with community members at events to share information about voting and to help with voter registration.
- Help with VOTE411, an online League voter information service to provide voters with local candidate information on backgrounds and goals so they may make informed ballot decisions. We need members who would enjoy contacting the candidates, encouraging them to use this service as a means of connecting with the voters. We also need members who have some technology skills to help get this information input into the VOTE411 system.
- We need volunteers to help with “Pros and Cons” presentations to community groups. This is an opportunity to learn more about the 14 state ballot measures and share this information with others. Volunteers work together to consider both sides of the propositions and present them in a non-partisan manner.
- We need help with our upcoming Candidate Forums. We have various ways in which you can help before, during, or after these events.
- What interests you? How can you participate in the services LWVML provides to our local voters? Let us know so we can give you detailed information about upcoming events and provide you with the training you may need. Again, we need the participation of our members to provide these services to our communities in Calaveras and Tuolumne counties.

Contact Susan Medeiros, Voter Services Chair, at 209-840-2066 or susanmedeiros@gmail.com. Phone, text, or email me, and I will get right back to you. Thanks!

Our next Voter Services Committee meeting will be on Monday, August 17th, at 1:30 at the Senior Center in Sonora. All are welcome to attend.

Committees continued

Observer Corps (OC):

Committee Members: Lynn Johnson, Leonides Russell, Susan Medeiros, Stefani Reichle, Pam Vlach, Maria Benech, Kate Segerstrom, and Jane Braga (Chair)

The Observer Corps Team has finalized our mid-year report. It will be out at the end of July. It will go out to our League first, then be in the Union Democrat.

Observer Corps meets on the last Wednesday of the month, at 1:30, at the Senior Center. Our July meeting will occur after this newsletter goes out.

Democracy (in action) Interest Group (DIG)

Members: Tia Andersen, Janis Ossa, Brenda McHenry, Trudy Craig, Irene Wetzel, Susan Medeiros, Maria Benech, and Martha Rubin (Lead)

The DIG committee will meet on Friday, August 21st, at Starbucks in Angels Camp, from 1:30 - 2:30/3:00 pm. We will be working closely with the Voter Services Committee and Observer Corps during the upcoming election season. Specifically, we will be working with the Pros and Cons committee on community presentations, candidate forums, LWV tabling opportunities, and public events where we can get our messages out.

We are also putting together an information page to explain why our elections are safe and secure and why voter fraud is a non-issue that does not need to be fixed. This is to counter support and arguments for the SAVE Act.

For more information, contact Martha Rubin at 650-619-7136 or email rubinmartha@gmail.com.

Fire Interest Group (FIG)

Members: Karen Caldwell, Martha Rubin, Maureen Kelley, Stefani Reichle, Elsie Bruno, Deborah Rei, Patricia Dunlap, Julie Johnson, and Maria Benech (Lead)

On hiatus until September 8th.

If you have any questions, contact Maria Benech at runmcb@gmail.com or 209-559-3504.

Homelessness Interest Group (HIG)

Members: Ted Michaud, Patricia Horsthuis, Trudy Craig, Suzanne Hennessy, Cindy Roberts, and Leonides Russell (Lead)

On hiatus until further notice.

If you have any questions or interest in joining the group, please contact Leonides Russell.

Water Interest Group (WIG)

Members: Patricia Horsthius, Leonides Russell, Suzanne Hennessy, Jeff Hollis, Tom Parrington, Cris Barsanti, Margaret Willits, and Jane Braga (Lead)

WIGs have been quiet this summer. We are looking forward to a field trip to the Mi-Wuk Water District. It will be interesting to see how one of our smaller water districts operates.

TUD held a groundbreaking for the Sierra Pines Water Treatment Plant in Twain Harte. Jeff Hollis and Leonides Russell attended. When completed, this will replace at least six older stations.



Right side photos—LWVML member Jeff Hollis (third from the left) and other TUD Board Members at the groundbreaking.

Photo below—Leonides Russell giving us some scale of the equipment being used on the sight, thanks Leo.



ALERT FROM LWVC Water Committee! The California Coastal Management Committee is under attack from the Federal Government. The Coastal Commission is a federal/state partnership to protect beaches and the California coast. The Federal Government's desire to restart offshore drilling in Santa Barbara County, and the denial of a request to increase SpaceX commercial rocket launches at Vandenberg Air Force Base has increased tensions between the state and the Federal Government. Commerce Secretary Ludnick has called for a federal review of the Coastal Commission. NOAA is accepting written comments from the public until August 22, at 11:59 pm, PT. Send comments to czma.california-evaluation@noaa.gov

For more information www.surfrider.org

Next WIG meeting: September 16, 2026, 11:30. Schnoogs. **No August meeting.**

Part 2 of the 2026 LWV National Convention Delegate Report **by Jane Braga and Karen Caldwell**

The LWV National Convention consisted of two components: Plenary and Breakout sessions. Last month we talked about the Plenary sessions. This time we will tell you about the Breakout sessions.

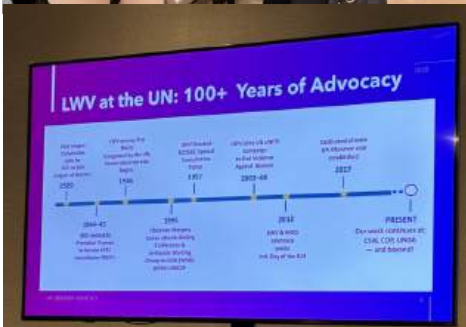
Breakout sessions were presented by League members to inform, educate, or lobby. Between the two of us, Karen and I attended six sessions: Climate Interest Group (CIG), Passage of National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, Observer Corps, UN Observer Advocacy, Recognizing Harmful Norms in White-Dominant Spaces, and Updating the League Study Process. The work of our League is impressive.

We left each session with new information, some more than others. Highlights included the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact as a workaround for the Electoral College. States participating in the compact would award all their electoral votes to the presidential ticket that received the most popular votes nationwide. Recognizing and becoming aware of cultural biases in our white-dominant culture was sobering. Our LWVML Observer Corps upholds the national standards of protecting democracy on a local level. Our presence at the United Nations with both Special Consultative and Observer Status is impressive. We have one official and two alternate observers. Our LWV public policy positions on Representative Government, Natural Resources, Social Policy, and International Relations lend our voice to seventeen UN committees that relate directly to their 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To learn more about any of these topics, feel free to contact Jane or Karen. Also, you can Google LWV and the topic for more information.

We work hard in our LWVML communities to defend democracy, empower voters, and impact issues. It was so exciting to see how far the impact of our national League reaches. One of the UN Observers reminded us of the universality of issues. All issues are international and global issues. Other nations are also dealing with the issues that we deal with both locally and nationally.

For more information on any of these topics, Google LWV and the topic. There is a wealth of information available. The LWV is a dynamic organization committed to preserving and protecting our democracy.



How You Can Renew/Join

Renew/join today online at LWVML.org. Your dues support national, state, and local League efforts. When you go to the website, you will see the “Join” 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). You can also just mail a check to our Post Office Box if that is easier for you. Make the \$75 check payable to “League of Women Voters of the Mother Lode or LWVML” and mail it to: LWVML, P.O. Box 5393, Sonoma, California 95370.

Our League offers full scholarships for anyone who wants to join, and LWV also has a sliding scale for members (pay as little as \$20 per year). Please don't hesitate to ask us about this; we do not want money to be a barrier to membership.

LWVML is a 501(c)3 organization, and all donations are tax-deductible—tax ID #873922182. LWVML receives only \$15 of the \$75 from National dues. This part is tax-deductible, but the remaining \$60 is not. LWV and LWVC activities include political lobbying and advocacy, which disqualifies donations from being considered as charitable donations.

From LWV and LWVC for the week of July 17th—July 24th

- **Administration Updates**

President Trump continued to pressure Congressional Republicans this week on a third reconciliation package to add more military spending. The House responded by passing the bill on Wednesday.

- **Congress Updates**

This week, the House passed three major bills — the annual NDAA, a bill that limits lawmakers trading stocks- which also contained the Voter ID Act, and a budget resolution for reconciliation 3.0. The House will go on recess today and plans to return on August 31st.

The Senate will be in session next week and the following week before recessing on August 8th. In that time, they will focus on nominations for Cabinet positions and a Russia sanctions bill.

NEW! Voter ID Act Explainer [Page](#)

Our new Voter ID Act Explainer page is a one-stop shop for all you need to know about the Voter ID Act, why it's bad for voting rights, and how it compares to SAVE/SAVE America Acts. League members can also download related materials for easy sharing.

Sign Up Now for LWV's 2026 Election Webinar Series

League members are invited to attend this training series on a variety of vital election topics ahead of voting in the 2026 general election. Sign up for the trainings on the [League Management Site](#).

July LWVML Board Decisions (from the Retreat and Board Meeting)

- ◆ We will no longer hold monthly General Meetings. We want them to be timely and relevant to both our members and the public. The focus is on participation in committees and interest groups, where the work of the League is done.
- ◆ No General Meeting will be held in September, November, January, March, or April. This is subject to change if the Board deems it necessary or critical for our members and the public.
- ◆ The Board adopted a DEI policy for our League. It will be voted on by the membership at our Annual Meeting in June.
- ◆ The Board approved a Land Acknowledgement Statement to be added to our Mission Statement. It will be voted on by the membership at our Annual Meeting in June.
- ◆ The Board discussed and worked on a Non-Partisan Policy for our League. It was finalized at the July Board meeting. It will be voted on by the membership at our Annual Meeting in June.
- ◆ Brenda, Janis, and Jane volunteered to review and propose any needed updates to our Bylaws for 2027.
- ◆ Karen volunteered to design our new business cards. We have old ones, but the information is incorrect, and it's time for a refresh. These new ones will be personalized.
- ◆ Jane will finalize our annual calendar, and it will be sent out to all members. It will be updated as needed, and new event dates become available.
- ◆ We will focus on getting short articles into the "Community" section of the Union Democrat. Jane will draft an article for Pros and Cons, and Suzanne is drafting one for the Candidate Forums.



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 to ask her to send out a Care Card.

LWVML 2026/2027 BOARD OFFICERS:

Presidential Triad — **Maria Benech, Jane Braga, and 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 Non-Board Positions: Nominating Committee Chair - **Leslie Klay**; Nominating Committee Members - **Maureen Kelley** and **Charlene Dambacher**; Greeters — **Cris Barsanti** and **Jeff Klay**; Webmaster—**Dorene Hensler**; Historian—TBD

The League of Women Voters of the Mother Lode is a tax exempt organization as described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code: Tax ID #87-3922182.

Help California Voters Make Informed Decisions

The League of Women Voters of California is seeking dedicated volunteers who are passionate about voter education and civic engagement to support our work on VOTE411.

What is VOTE411?

VOTE411 is a nonpartisan online election guide operated by the League of Women Voters. California's volunteer network helps provide voters with information about local candidates and ballot measures across the state.

Join a team that helps voters access trusted election information before they cast their ballots.

VOTE 411



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Support VOTE411 efforts in your county and help keep local election information accurate and complete!

Responsibilities include:

- ✓ Researching & collecting candidate contact info
- ✓ Making phone calls and sending emails to candidates
- ✓ Entering local ballot measure information into the VOTE411 system
- ✓ Coordinating with local League volunteers
- ✓ Promoting VOTE411 in your community



No technical experience is required for most volunteer tasks.



TRAINING & SUPPORT

We Set You Up For Success!

- ✓ Live training sessions
- ✓ Weekly office hours and volunteer support
- ✓ One-on-one guidance from experienced VOTE411 Liaisons
- ✓ Access to the CA VOTE411 volunteer community & resources



Every volunteer receives a CA VOTE411 email address to maintain professionalism and protect personal contact information.



TIMELINE

Key dates for the November Election

- Volunteer training sessions
Week of August 3
- Volunteer work begins
August 2026
- Ballots mailed to voters
October 5, 2026



Estimated time commitment:
Approximately 5-10 hrs/week
between August & October



WHY VOLUNTEER?

- Support nonpartisan voter education
- Help voters make informed choices
- Connect with local candidates
- Strengthen democracy in your community



INTERESTED IN JOINING THE TEAM?

Contact:

Sharon Stone

Director of Voter Engagement
and Membership

sstone@cavote411.org

(916) 442-7215