

THE VOTER

November 2025

Empowering Voters - Defending Democracy

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A Message from LWVML Presidential Triad —

Maria Benech, Jane Braga, and Leonides Russell

On Saturday, October 18th, more than 7 million Americans in over 2,700 events in all 50 states, D.C., and cities worldwide participated in No Kings events. The message was clear. In the United States of America, there are no thrones, no crowns, no kings. Our constitution is clear on that point: separation of powers, the people hold the power of the vote. The demonstrations were pro-democracy, defense of democracy, and "I love America" events.

Upon reflection, some may wonder, do such protests make a difference? Even as big as they were, can protests effect change in the face of an

administration's threats to our democracy? What good are inflatable frogs against federal agents?

Lisa Corrigan, Ph.D., noted scholar of civil rights and social justice movements, says, "Yes, they can and do make a difference. Large, fun marches full of art and music expand connections and make people more willing to participate and take risks against growing state power. They help grow the community by creating new images that bring together recognizable images from the past in new ways. The Colbert Show introduced Kermit the Frog as the leader of this movement! This helps people see themselves in such an opposition. These events, by building community and good feelings, help carry opposition through hard moments."

These rallies, with the unicorns, frogs, and a general playful, positive atmosphere, can help create enthusiasm for big-tent politics. Corrigan notes that the "frogs (and unicorns and dinosaurs) will be defining ideographs of this period of struggle."

Dr. Corrigan noted further that "every single rally (including in small towns) was bigger than the surrounding police force available. That kind of image is VERY IMPORTANT if you're ... demonstrating AGAINST a fascist government."

In our Tuolumne County, No Kings rally, each element was demonstrated. We will continue to do our part to defend democracy. See page 2 for photos of some examples of our participation.

What makes for a successful, effective political movement? We'll talk about that next month.

Maria, Jane, and Leonides

Maria, Leo, and Jane on the WIG Field Trip to the West Side Log Pond Dam on October 22nd.



LWVML at the No Kings Rally on October 18th

The League of Women Voters officially supported the second No Kings Rally held in October as a National partner. Our League had a Voter Registration and Information table at the event, and we spoke with many people and registered some new voters as well—a very successful afternoon. Many of our members were there with signs and flags.



Saturday, November 1st, 10:30 am to 12:30 pm

General Meeting— Murphys Branch Library, 480 Park Lane, Murphys

Join us for a fascinating talk from Marian Coahran. She is a Senior Senator for the California Legislature. She was elected by Area 12 on Aging, and is a legislative advocate for seniors.

Saturday, December 13th, 10 am to Noon

LWVML HOLIDAY PARTY at the Sonora Main Library

November and December Meetings/Events

Saturday November 1st, 10:30 am to 12:30 pm

Firewise Calaveras Festival (FREE EVENT) -

LWVML will have a booth there too.

Angels Camp Fairgrounds

Sunday November 2nd, 2 pm

Fire Interest Group MOVIE Preview DAY

Karen Caldwell's Home

Monday November 10th, 10:30 am

Homelessness Interest Group—Leo Russell, Lead

Sonora Senior Center

Tuesday November 11th, 4:30 pm

Fire Interest Group—Maria Benech, Lead

Karen Caldwell's Home

Wednesday November 12th, 1 pm to 3 pm

Membership Committee — Patricia Horsthuis, Chair

Sonora Senior Center (Room B)

Monday November 17th, 1 pm to 3 pm

Voter Services — Susan Medeiros, Chair

Sonora Senior Center

No Meeting in November

Water Interest Group—Jane Braga, Lead

Monday December 1st, 11:30 am to 2:30 pm

LWVML Board Meeting

Sonora Senior Center

Wednesday December 3rd, 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

Observer Corps —Jane Braga, Chair

Senior Center in Sonora

Saturday December 13th, 10 am to noon

HOLIDAY PARTY

Sonora Main Library

Tuesday December 9th, 4:30 pm

Fire Interest Group—Maria Benech, Lead

Karen Caldwell's Home

Wednesday December 10th, 1 pm to 3 pm

Membership Committee — Patricia Horsthuis, Chair

Sonora Senior Center (Room B)

Monday December 15th, 1 pm to 3 pm

Voter Services — Susan Medeiros, Chair

Sonora Senior Center

No Meeting in December

Water and Homelessness Interest Groups

Updates from LWVUS and State Leagues

On October 15th, the League and partners showed up in support of Black voters as the US Supreme Court heard oral arguments in [*Louisiana v. Callais*](#). This significant voting rights case takes up the constitutionality of Section 2 of the *Voting Rights Act*, threatening fair and meaningful representation for communities of color in our democracy. Thank YOU to the League members who joined us in DC yesterday and to those who tuned in via our livestream at home. In case you missed the rally, you can [check out photos](#) on our Flickr profile.

• Statements/Messaging

- ♦ [Nonpartisan Voting Rights Organizations File Lawsuit in Indiana Challenging Unlawful Citizenship Check Laws](#)
- ♦ [League of Women Voters Seeks to Protect California Voter Data Against Federal Overreach](#)
- ♦ [League of Women Voters Announces Erica Teti-Zilinskas as Senior Director of Communications](#)

○ Congress Updates

- The House continued its “in-district work period.” Representatives have been on recess for 35 days. They will also not return next week to the Capitol. The Speaker of the House also refuses to swear in Congresswoman-elect Adelita Grijalva.
- The Senate was in session this week. Senators were unable to overcome filibusters to vote on the bill to open the government. A bill that would have paid essential federal workers (those on the job, but not getting paid) and members of the military was introduced, but was unable to overcome a filibuster. Next week, senators will return with expected votes on nominations, the CR to fund the government, and maybe other bills.

○ Administration Updates

- The President welcomed the LSU and LSU Shreveport Baseball champions, demolished the East Wing of the White House, issued sanctions on Russian oil companies, ended trade negotiations with Canada, and continued to ramp up military escalations in Latin America.
- Vice President Vance was in the Middle East to maintain the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.
- The EAC closed its comment collection on a petition that seeks to initiate a rulemaking process to add documentary proof of citizenship to the federal voter registration form. [Read LWVUS comments](#). Thank you to the state and local Leagues submitting comments and promoting the action alert. If you have not sent final copies of organizational comment, you can still send them to advocacy@lww.org

○ Litigation

- ♦ LWVIN filed a federal lawsuit over the state’s new documentary proof of citizenship law. [See press release](#).
- ♦ LWVC filed a motion to intervene in a federal case to protect Californians’ personal voter data from use by the federal government. [See press release](#).



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

Voter Services Committee:

- Need for Vote Center workers! Tuolumne County is short-staffed for Election Day on November 4th. They have opened the Election Worker position on the County's Job Opportunities page. If you know anyone who may be interested and available, please send them this link: [Tuolumne County Election Worker Application](#). To get an application to work in Calaveras County, please email: electionsweb@calaverascounty.gov These are paid positions and training is provided.
- Calaveras Firewise Community Information Event – November 1st! After our LWVML General Meeting in Murphys, go over to the Calaveras Fairgrounds outside of Angels Camp. Our League, other non-profits, and some for profit companies will have information tables. Fire-related information will be available too.
- Help needed! We want to collect pocket-sized copies of the Constitution to assist us in our work to educate voters. Contact your Congressional representatives. Their offices will mail some copies to you for free. Thank you.
- Voter Services distributed 250 copies of the LWVC Easy Voter Guide in Tuolumne & Calaveras Counties to prepare voters for the upcoming election on Proposition 50.
- Some of the women inmates at the Tuolumne County Jail participated in a discussion session about voting. Topics included women's voting rights, reasons to vote, sources of election information, and instructions about voter registration. Those awaiting trial and not convicted of a felony are eligible to vote even if they are in jail. Thanks to Sheriff Vasquez and our presenters, Pam Vlach and Leonides Russell! See their report below.
- LWVML provided a voter information/voter registration table at the No Kings Rally in October. Lots of folks stopped by with questions, and we registered four people to vote. It was a very successful day.

Are you interested in joining the Voter Services Committee? We want YOU! Contact Susan Medeiros at susanmedeiros@gmail.com or at (209) 840-2966.

LWVML Educating Voters in Jail

Pam Vlach and Leonides Russell gave a presentation to three groups of inmates at the Tuolumne County Jail on voting and voting rights. Each session was in two parts. Part 1 was a brief history of the events that led to the constitutional right to vote. Part 2 was how and where to register to vote and a review of the registration form. Inmates asked questions and took part in the discussion following each session.

We want to express our appreciation to Sheriff David Vasquez and his staff for facilitating this part of our Voter Education Program. This was the first time our League has done this and we hope to continue this program in the future.

Committees continued

Observer Corps:

Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors (BOS)

October 7th. Supervisor Griefer had placed an item on the Consent Calendar to approve a Resolution for a Tuolumne County position against Proposition 50. It was pulled because voting was taking place in the building. The discussion would be considered electioneering which is violation of State election law.

Board members were rude to the representative from the California Department of Insurance when she was giving her report. They later apologized for their verbal attacks.

October 21st. Supervisor Griefer placed an item on the agenda to consider adopting a Resolution designating October 14, 2025 and future years on the same day, as a National Day of Remembrance for Charlie Kirk in Tuolumne County. Supervisor Kirk presented an alternate Resolution, but it was not properly placed on the agenda ahead of time. The public did not have sufficient time to review his document. Supervisors Kirk and Campbell will work on a Resolution. The item was tabled. It will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

At both October meetings, County staff spoke during Public Comment expressing frustration and disappointment with the progress, or lack thereof, in their contract negotiations with County.

Sonora City Council

October 6th. Tuolumne County District 1 Supervisor Mike Holland gave a report, continuing the practice begun by his predecessor, David Goldemberg. He used this time to show a slide presentation on the 2025-2026 adopted county budget. He included two edited clips. The only speaker in both clips was Supervisor Campbell speaking on the budget. His comments appeared to be contradictory, making Campbell seem confused, which was pointed out by Supervisor Holland. This was unnecessary and self-serving.

Council members Segerstrom and Merrill shared with Holland their disappointment that the County declined to partner with the City on the North-South Connector Project. "We do not see ourselves as adversarial," Mayor Segerstrom commented in apparent response to previous comments by County Supervisors.

The Council voted to waive the first reading to dissolve 4 City Commissions, suggesting that Ad Hoc committees would be more effective. City Tree and Landscaping Board, City Cemetery Committee, Parks, Recreation, and Beautification Committee, and Parking and Traffic Commission passed with 5-0 votes, except the last which Councilmember Plummer opposed.

The City approved the contract with a new waste management company. Green waste will now be included. The waste management company will share recycling revenue with the City.

October 20th. City Council passed a Proclamation Condemning Violence and Promoting Respectful Dialogue with a 5-0 vote.

The Council voted with the waiving of the second reading to dissolve the 4 City commissions/committees. Sonora City Administrator will oversee these areas without input from these committees/commissions.

Tuolumne Utility District (TUD)

October 14th. Ditch work continues. Water supply in Pinecrest has "normal" loss. Work on Phoenix Lake station continues. Spill gates at Lyons are "normal" and fish are thriving. Lower SaveMart hydrant was replaced. It had been damaged. The company responsible for the damage paid \$11,000 for the replacement. Zero violations of hazardous materials were found!

October 28th. Meeting too late for publication. It will be included next month.

Next OC meeting is Wednesday, December 3rd, at 1:30 at the Sonora Senior Center. All are welcome to attend. Contact Jane Braga at jbraga49@gmail.com or 209-768-3842 for more information.

Homelessness Interest Group (HIG)

At our last meeting there was an update on the Habitat for Humanity Project in Calaveras County. Printed copies will be made available to the group for discussion. A member reported a conversation with Tuolumne County Supervisor Campbell where he stated that he was proud of the county's progress regarding homelessness, especially work done by Behavioral Health. We are looking into the coordination of services for the unhoused.

The Navigation Center in Soulsbyville has been a big success. To date, 75 families have transitioned to other housing. **They are asking for donations of new twin-size bed sheets** since this is an item that most families take with them.

Our next meeting is Monday, November 10th at the Senior Center at 10:30.

If you are interested in joining the group, please email Leo Russell at 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)

See page 8 for a report on the WIGs Field Trip on October 22nd to the West Side Log Pond Dam.

WIGs meet on the fourth Wednesday of the month at Schnoogs, 11:30 am, but due to the holidays, our next meeting will be January 28th.

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 7th, 14th, and 21st. 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 getting finalized for films, discussions, speakers, and interactive exercises.

The group and the Board are gathering on November 2nd to preview two films proposed for the series. Join us at 2 pm at Karen Caldwell's home if you are interested.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, November 11th, at 4:30 pm at Karen Caldwell's home. Contact Maria Benech for directions at runmcb@gmail.com or 209-559-3504.



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.

WIGs (and some FIGs too) gathered at the West Side Log Pond Dam

Several LWVML members gathered on October 22nd for a fascinating field trip. Project Manager Kip Wivell was our host, assisted by Shauta, a representative from the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians. They shared information about the history of the pond, dating back to 1899. Sawmill operations ceased in the 1960s. By 2004, when the Me-Wuks acquired the property, the pond had deteriorated into a mud bog with a creek flowing through it. The restoration project, rehabilitating the West Side Dam and refilling the West Side Pond, had multiple benefits – enhancing groundwater recharge; ecosystem improvement, restoring flora and fauna; and providing a water source for fire suppression in the area. The pond now stores about 124-acre feet of water. You must get permission from the Tribe to access this area.

We were in awe of this project. The pond is beautiful, pristine, and surrounded by lush vegetation. Two coots (a native bird species) cruised the pond in search of lunch. Kip pointed out to us a California Bay tree, Umbellularia californica, which had been barely waist-high two years ago, and now towered over us as we walked, a testament to the healthy response to the restoration.

We were overwhelmed by the beauty and success of this project. Kudos to the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians, who provided the majority of the funding. Thank you to Kip and to Shauta for taking the time to share this with us! Enjoy the pictures, which provide a peek at this beautiful site!



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.

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.

Membership Committee Chair

Our League is seeking a new lead for this committee. Some long-time members and the current chair will remain on the committee to assist with contacting members for involvement in League activities, promoting membership engagement, educating new members on what the League is and does, and keeping membership status up to date. This position is a member of the Board of Directors.

Aronos Research Club
presents a live performance of
Duende Drama and Literature's production of
a Rick Foster play

Gunpowder Man

Sunday, November 2nd at 2 p.m.
In the Aronos Clubhouse
37 Elkin Street in downtown Sonoma
The Public is Welcome
Free of Charge
Performed by local artist
Lesly Tejero Baker



Hear the tale of Little Tiger, a young woman forced to flee China during the Taiping Rebellion in the 1860s. For her protection she disguises herself as a man, and finds employment working on the construction of Central Pacific Railroad following the California Gold Rush, setting explosive charges in the granite rock along the route.

It is a one-woman show with a compelling story that needs to be told. The play is a magnificent tale of hope and betrayal on two continents. It does not necessarily have a happy ending, but it does close on a note of optimism after Little Tiger must choose between revenge and forgiveness.

ARONOS RESEARCH CLUB HAS PROUDLY SERVED THE COMMUNITY SINCE 1915
For more information call (209) 770-1144 or email aronosresearchclub@yahoo.com

How You Can Renew/Join

Renew/join today online at 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.

October LWVML Board Decisions

- ◆ Discussed putting in writing our “Standing Rules/Policies” as well as a Decision Log. The Board established a subcommittee to work on this process. The members are Maria Benech, Karen Caldwell, Jane Braga, and Brenda McHenry.
- ◆ The new website should be ready in two weeks (or less). The Board asked that it include a “button” that a user can hit to be added to a mailing list. They also wanted our “Members Only” section to link directly to California’s, to make it easy for our members to see what the State is up to.
- ◆ With the new website, our documents will move to Google Drive through our email.
- ◆ Decided in the future, that we should not make publicity posters larger than 11 inches by 17 inches (and only a few of those), mostly 8.5 inches by 11 inches, and some smaller “postcards too.
- ◆ LWVML will participate in the Pop Hudson Christmas Singalong again this year. It will be on December 19th.
- ◆ We will send out an annual fundraising letter to our members and friends. We will only send out a request for donations once a year.
- ◆ We want to add members' names (no other personal information) to our committee and interest group lists in the Voter and on other written material. We will ask members if they are ok with this before doing it.
- ◆ The Board approved the wording and purchase of ‘Reminder Cards’ for membership renewal.

Christmas Tree Lane

We need members to join our committee to work on our Christmas Tree that will be in Courthouse Park again this year. The committee will determine our tree theme, make decorations, and, of course, decorate the tree. Trees are put up just before Thanksgiving weekend. This is a fun project and gives us some great visibility in the community. Join us! Contact Karen Caldwell at 209-559-9527.

Photo of last year’s LWVML tree.



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**

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 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>.

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. 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.

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.

Photos Right: Some of our local League members expressing **their personal** views on Prop 50.

