

THE VOTER

League of Women Voters of Stanislaus County
www.lwvstanislaus.org



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Amy Wolfe
LWVSC President

Dear LWVSC Members and Friends,

We've started our League year on the best possible footing with an exceptional Meet and Learn featuring Sheriff Jeff Dirkse. He offered thoughtful and refreshing insights into two equally complex and different challenges impacting his sphere of influence.

I was impressed with how the Sheriff explained the working relationship between his office and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). He articulated in practical terms the federal and state legal requirements surrounding deportation, and offered personal perspective on the tactics currently being used across agencies.

He also endeavored, with not nearly enough time, to unravel the complexities of the 911 emergency dispatch system changes. This complex Gordian knot became a bit clearer to me from his sequential explanation, but just barely.

What his entire presentation did for me was reaffirm what many of us know to be true - there is tremendous value in hearing directly from the source. So much of what the sheriff discussed has become fodder for the 24-hours news cycle or distilled into sound bites that remove vital context and background.

It further validates our League's ongoing commitment to educating our citizenry. Whether through our Meet and Learn series each month or with standalone activities, like our upcoming webinar focused on the Ins and Outs of Prop 50, we are leaning with intent into offering our community more opportunities to fully understand the issues impacting each of us.

If there is an issue you believe we should explore further, I encourage you to reach out and share your ideas with me at 209-499-4091 or amy@mujeres-poderosas.com. I look forward to connecting with you either in person or online for our upcoming webinar.

In Service,

Amy

LWVSC Board Meeting Highlights September 2025

The LWVSC Board of Directors met on September 10, 2025, to conduct its regular business. Highlights are below.

- A number of new members have joined and many have renewed their memberships to LWVSC. Donations have come in as well.
- Easy Voter Guide bundles will be ordered for the November 4 state election on Proposition 50. A Zoom session for Prop 50 will be held in October and then uploaded to our website.
- Board Member Seena Rhine shared an outline of the many topics discussed during the meetings she attends as our representative to LWV California (LWVC) Water Committee, which studies and advocates for water issues in our state, doing so since the 1950s. (See article)

Welcome New Members!

Ana Andrade

Patty Bahrijczuk

Welcome

LWVC Water Committee - State Action

LWVSC Representative on State Committee

Longtime LWVSC member, Seena Rhine, is a member of the LWV California (LWVC) Water Committee, which studies and advocates for water issues in our state since the 1950s. Managing water for public and private use is essential for the well-being of our population and California's economy. LWVC monitors action throughout the state and makes recommendations regarding policy actions. As a board member, Seena regularly reports on the committee's meetings. She offered this overview of the committee's work.

Legislation – The committee discusses bills that concern water as they progress through the California Assembly and Senate.

Climate Change – The water committee works closely with the team that monitors these issues.

Reports – Regular reports are received from the California Water Commission, about Colorado River status, regional areas of concern, and LWVUS.

Specific Topics for the LWVC Water Committee include:

- Groundwater supplies, conservation, and recharge
- Desalination programs
- Access to clean water in both rural and urban areas
- Present and proposed reservoir storage
- Ongoing and future State water projects
- Pollution and cleanup of the Tijuana River on the Mexico/California border

LWVSC In Action



Board Members Laurie Carley and Angelina Ceja provided information to the community at the Modesto Rotary Club Senior Stride event on September 19th in East La Loma Park, Modesto



Local Action Report

Note important actions related to River Walk Development, Modesto Initiative 2028, and the Scannell Project in Salida.

River Walk Overview - This proposed development is 2 miles from downtown Riverbank. River Walk itself encompasses approximately 997 acres of the 1500 acres that currently is in the unincorporated area of Stanislaus County. To put it in perspective, Riverbank wants to stretch to McHenry Avenue. The City of Riverbank has more than ample pre-approved land which is available to construct thousands of new homes due to annexation in 2016. The need for this project has not been demonstrated.

- July 9, 2025 - De Novo Planning Group provided a presentation providing update on River Walk's Draft Environment Impact Report (EIR) analysis and mitigations to a joint Riverbank City Council and Planning Commission meeting. This was not a Public Hearing
- July 22, 2025 - L WVSC President Amy Wolfe wrote a letter to Riverbank's City Council and its Planning Commission to reinforce the League's opposition to the development as well as need to delay any "action" until a vote by the citizens in November 2026 on an urban growth boundary initiative.
- July 2025 - At the Riverbank City Council meeting, a report from the water project consultant said that water rates would need to go up an additional 6% per year for the next 3 years if River Walk were approved.
- Action: Pay close attention for the updated EIR and hearings at the Planning Commission and City Council. Stanislaus Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) hearings should be scheduled; be prepared to attend to express your opposition. Approvals should not occur until after the citizens vote on the urban boundary initiative.

Modesto Initiative Notification - Farmland Working Group is preparing a local voter initiative for the 2028 ballot. Approval of the measure would establish an urban limit for Modesto along Kiernan Avenue, from Highway 99 to McHenry Avenue, where it becomes Claribel Road. The urban limit would extend along Claribel Road to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway tracks near Riverbank. The advocacy group will need to collect signatures from 10% of Modesto's registered voters to get place the measure on the 2028 ballot.

(continued on page 5)

LOCAL ACTION, continued:

Salida Scannell Project Overview - In 2007, rather than putting this robust plan on the ballot, Stanislaus County Supervisors approved the Salida Community Plan in a 3-2 decision. The 2008 recession tabled the approved growth, and planning has been dormant since then, until the spring of 2024, with the Scannell Project proposal. Scannell Project comprises a 145-acre warehouse development on the northwest corner of Dale Road and Kiernan Avenue, just north of Modesto's Kaiser Hospital.

- July 2024 - Stanislaus County supervisors approved an expenditure of \$900,000 as a consent item to perform a long-awaited environmental study on the Salida Community Plan and assess the feasibility of Salida becoming a city.
- To speed up the development of the project, the Scannell Developers requested to be annexed into the City of Modesto to utilize existing water, sewer, and storm drainage infrastructure. Utility infrastructure (electrical, gas, telephone, and cable) would be installed to provide utility sphere of influence amendment and annexation of these 145 acres to Modesto.
- The project site is currently located within Stanislaus County and within the City of Modesto's General Plan Planning Area, but outside the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI). The proposed project includes an SOI amendment to incorporate the site into the City's SOI. Concurrent with the SOI amendment, the Project proposes an annexation of the 145-acre site into the City of Modesto.

Needed Action:

- Monitor for pending Environmental Impact Review (EIR)
- Watch for meetings of the City of Modesto and Stanislaus Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), which also needs to approve the project for it to proceed.
- Monitor Salida's response and position on this proposal.

Submitted by Colleen Preston

LWVSC Active on Social Media

Be sure to like, follow and share our Facebook and Instagram pages with your networks!



@lwwstanislauscounty



@lwwstanco

Meet and Learn Event September 18, 2025

LWVSC had the pleasure of hosting Stanislaus County Sheriff Jeff Dirkse as our speaker for the September 18th Meet and Learn at Gather. We received over 30 RSVPs, making this one of our larger events.

Sheriff Dirkse addressed two key topics: immigration and the county's dispatch system. He provided an overview of the relationship between federal immigration enforcement and his office's role in enforcing state and local laws, noting the limitations of his jurisdiction. He emphasized that his office does not enforce federal immigration laws, though he has had initial conversations with federal agencies in California regarding possible notifications of enforcement activities in the area. He also answered audience questions, which reflected a strong interest in this important issue.

In addition, Sheriff Dirkse spoke about the county's dispatch system. He explained the complexities and challenges his department faces with the current system, while also discussing opportunities for improvement and potential changes that would best serve his department and the community.

We are grateful that Sheriff Dirkse was able to participate in this Meet and Learn event, and we look forward to future opportunities for him to engage with League members and guests.



The Ins and Outs of Prop 50

**October 7, 2025
5:30 pm – 6:00 pm**

Join us to for a live webinar to learn the details of Proposition 50 about Congressional redistricting to be decided by California voters in the November 4th special election.

Presentation includes time for Q&A.

Recording will be made available on lwgstanislaus.org following the event.

Zoom Meeting
Meeting ID: 844-9128-8560
Passcode: 905917



MEET & LEARN

October 16, 2025

12:00pm – 1:30pm
Gather, 2424 McHenry Avenue, Modesto

Joe Kieta and Misty Avila

Central Valley Journalism Collaborative

Our speakers will share the exciting journey of bringing to life the new Modesto Focus and the local journalism movement taking root across the country.

Cost: \$30 per person

Register online at www.lwvstanislaus.org or scan:

*Advanced registrations online required.
Deadline is October 13, 2025.*



Upcoming Meet & Learn Luncheons

November 20, 2025: Marvin Jacobo, City Ministry Network
Building the Latino Leadership Initiative

January 22, 2026: Randy Fiorini, Farmer and Water Expert
5 Most Pressing Water Issues in California

Thank you to our Meet & Learn Sponsors



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