

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,

What an incredible start to the new year! First, we launched the LWVSC Book Club and our coordinator, Denise Nordell, truly outdid herself. We were joined online by the author, the Honorable LaDoris Hazzard Cordell, retired, who shared the stories behind her story. She also offered her perspective on our current judicial landscape, as well as fun tidbits about the bringing her book to life. Ms. Hazzard Cordell was articulate, engaging, personable, and did a superb job of telling her story.

The very next day, we held a deeply informative Meet and Learn luncheon featuring Becky Hackler Arellano, the first female member of the Turlock Irrigation District Board of Directors. Becky provided thoughtful perspective into the challenges facing TID, along with the groundbreaking innovations they are piloting. As the first irrigation district in California, TID continues to lead the way in research, unique partnerships and finding ways to do more with less of this precious resource.

Two more Book Club dates have been selected for the year, as have two books. Save the dates and get a jump on the reading now! Details are provided at the end of this newsletter.

Join us February 19th for our next Meet and Learn Luncheon, where we are welcoming Amanda Hughes, Stanislaus 2030 Executive Director. Amanda is coming to provide an overview of the organization's mission and specifically, their current initiative meant to address the child care shortages plaguing our community. Amanda is a dynamic and passionate speaker - you won't want to miss it!

In Service,

Amy

LWVSC Board Meeting Highlights

January 2026

The LWVSC Board of Directors met on January 14, 2026, to conduct its regular business. Highlights are below.

- Treasurer Ellen Meyer reported that LWVSC's non-profit status update with the State of California was completed.
- Nominations for 2026-27 Board positions will begin soon.
- Meet and Learn expenses will soon exceed the price charged for the event, which includes lunch and the speaker. In order to avoid deficit spending, the LWVSC Board will seek a solution for the remaining programs this year.

Welcome

New LWVSC Members

Amy Collier Carroll
Jane Cluff
Sally Gerbo
Janet Pucci
Susan Thomas

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



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LWVSC Book Club - Her Honor, by LaDoris Hazzard Cordell

On January 21, 2026, LWVSC's first book club event was held at the Salida Library Community Room, welcoming author LaDoris Hazzard Cordell, whose memoir, *Her Honor*, provided insights into the work of a California Superior Court Judge. More than 25 attended, joined on video by Judge Cordell.

Appointed by Governor Jerry Brown in 1982, Judge Cordell was the first African-American female judge in California. She served as a judge in Santa Clara County to her retirement.

She began her talk with commending the League of Women Voters for the work we do; she believes voting is essential in our democracy. She quoted Coretta Scott King: "Exercising the right to vote can change society."

Describing her book, Judge Cordell noted that she wrote letters to her parents once a week for 8 years, describing her work. During a visit, her mother pulled out the stacks of letters. As the judge read them, she was struck by the number of cases and their variety she'd experienced. The idea of a book began to form.

Each chapter highlights a case and its details - victims and defendants, laws that were broken, attorneys, probation and police officers - and how the results seemed fair or not. Judge Cordell reminded the audience that judges have to follow the rule of law in making their decisions. However, in retirement, she is outspoken about the failings of the legal system and suggests changes to fix what is broken. Chapters in the book include titles meant to evoke the reader's curiosity:

- "Where There's a Will" - a man left money in his will to his cats.
- "Bad Judges" - how complaints are investigated at the state level.
- "Thank You for Your Service" - the importance and impact of serving on juries.
- "Judges for Sale," - when a judge is elected instead of appointed, large amounts of money are contributed, usually by lawyers, which could influence the judge's decisions.

During a lively Q & A portion of her talk, Judge Cordell provided a number of insights:

- She always wanted to work in the law to help people.
- In her opinion, cameras in the courtroom are good because they make the public more aware, but "TV judges" take away the seriousness of the job at hand for judges.
- She thinks law schools should offer courses in judging; none do at this time.
- Being aware of her own bias helped her treat the defendants in her court more fairly.

LWVSC thanks Denise Nordell, coordinator of the LWVSC Book Club, for a great event.

LWVSC Meet and Learn Event

Becky Hackler Arellano Turlock Irrigation District Board January 22, 2026

LWVSC welcomed Turlock Irrigation District Board Member Becky Hackler Arellano at Gather in Modesto to discuss her service on the Turlock Irrigation District board and the numerous projects undertaken by the District to provide irrigation water for farmers and electricity to a number of communities.

Director Arellano emphasized the need for TID to work cooperatively with other agencies, such as Hetch Hetchy Water and Power, run by San Francisco's Public Utilities Commission, and the Modesto Irrigation District. By working together and coming to consensus, they can move forward together to provide affordable water and power to their constituencies.

TID partners with agencies such as NASA to gain weather and snowpack data, with UC Merced to train engineers and with UC San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography to understand atmospheric rivers and their effects.

Some current TID projects are:

- Raise San Pedro Dam two feet to provide more storage;
- Place solar panels over four miles of canals to prevent water evaporation and produce energy;
- Place floating solar panels over a water basin to provide energy and feed the aquifer.

LWVSC President Amy Wolfe thanked Director Arellano for providing timely information about water, our area's most precious resource.

47th Annual Outstanding Women of Stanislaus County Awards Brunch

Please help the Stanislaus County Commission for Women celebrate and honor this year's class of Outstanding Women and Young Women of Stanislaus County. This year Angelina Ceja, LWVSC Vice President and Amy Collier Carroll, one of our League members, will be honored.

Saturday, March 14, 2026

10:00 a.m. No-Host Champagne Bar

10:30 a.m. Brunch

11:00 a.m. Program

Greens on Tenth

953 10th Street Modesto, CA 95354

Tickets are \$50.00 and can be purchased online at

<https://www.stanislauswomen.net/about-1>



Angelina Ceja



Amy Collier Carroll

LWVSC Workgroup - Modesto General Plan 2050

At the January LWVSC Board of Directors meeting, the decision was made to form a workgroup charged with developing more thoughtful, detailed, and robust comments about the Modesto General Plan 2050.

That opportunity should be made available by the city in Spring 2026.

If you are interested in joining the workgroup, even just to learn more about the proposed land use alternatives and the League's position on the various civic issues being considered (land use, transportation, agricultural and urban development, water use), please contact President Amy Wolfe at amy@mujeres-poderosas.com.

To learn more about the three land use alternatives, visit <https://gp2050.modestogov.com/documents/> and to get more information on the Modesto 2050 process, visit <https://gp2050.modestogov.com/>



MEET & LEARN

February 19, 2026

12:00 pm - 1:30 pm

Gather, 2424 McHenry Avenue, Modesto

Amanda Hughes, Executive Director
Stanislaus 2030

Join us as our speaker shares the story of Stanislaus 2030 and the current focus on expanding childcare across our community.

Cost: \$30 per person

Register online at www.lwvstanislaus.org or scan:

*Advanced registrations online required.
Deadline is February 16, 2026.*



Upcoming Meet & Learn Luncheons

March 19, 2026: Jessica Filbrun, Esq., Stanislaus Equity Partners (STEP)
Stories from a Community Development Corporation

April 23, 2026: Randy Fiorini, Farmer and Water Expert
5 Most Pressing Water Issues in California

Thank you to our Meet & Learn Sponsors



Kay and Mike Christensen

Anonymous Marie Bairey Kenni and Lou Friedman Theresa Kiehn Angelina Ceja



BOOK CLUB

May 6, 2026

The Woman's Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote
by Elaine Weiss

Nashville, August 1920. Thirty-five states have approved the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote; one last state—Tennessee—is needed for women's voting rights to be the law of the land. The suffragists face vicious opposition from politicians, clergy, corporations, and racists who don't want black women voting. And then there are the "Antis"—women who oppose their own enfranchisement, fearing suffrage will bring about the nation's moral collapse. And in one hot summer, they all converge for a confrontation, replete with booze and blackmail, betrayal and courage.

Join us as we expand our understanding of our 250-year-old experiment called Democracy through the reading and discussion of both fiction and nonfiction. Learn more at lwvstanislaus.org or contact Book Club Coordinator Denise Nordell at 209-840-8825 or denisenordell@gmail.com

Save the date: September 30, 2026 - *Lula Dean's Little Library of Banned Books* by Kirsten Miller