



Santa Cruz VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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Join Us for Our 61st Annual Meeting!

Keynote Speaker: County CEO Nicole Coburn

- **When:** Sunday, June 28, 2026
- **Where:** Crow's Nest Restaurant (Harbor Room), 2218 E Cliff Dr, Santa Cruz
- **Time:** 10:00 AM (check-in begins at 9:40)
- **Breakfast Cost:** \$40 per person (optional)
- **RSVP** by June 21 at lwscc.org

Join the League as we celebrate decades of advocacy and education at our 61st Annual Meeting on June 28.

This year we are honored to welcome Nicole Coburn, our County Executive Officer, as our featured keynote speaker. Since her unanimous appointment in October 2025, CEO Coburn has been leading our county with over 20 years of public service experience and a deep community connection. She will share her "view from the top," discussing her current plans, priorities, and the unique challenges of being Santa Cruz County's CEO.



Nicole Coburn, County CEO

Welcome to Our Newest Members

We are delighted to welcome our two newest members to the League! They are:

Greta Salmi
Kathryn Johnson

We hope to see you both at our annual meeting!

The public is welcome, so feel free to invite a friend! Please RSVP by June 21, 2026. You can register and pay online at lwscc.org. If you prefer to pay by mail, you can print the registration form from our website and send it in with your check (must be received by June 19). Reservations are required to attend (meal purchase is optional).

Don't miss this chance to hear directly from one of our county's most influential leaders and catch up with your fellow League members!

Questions? Reach out to us at league@lwscc.org; (831-325-4140)

President's Message

Thank you to Sandy Warren for hosting, to Pam Newbury for leading our discussion, and to all who participated in the lively and interesting local program planning meeting on March 31. Catherine Larrick, a new member to LWV Santa Cruz County, presented her concerns about housing problems and health care in our county, and Nancy Barr, who has transferred from the Colorado League, were major participants in the discussion, both sharing their ideas. Members on our Board of Directors also contributed to the discussion, took notes, and recommended several local programs for approval at our April 8 Board meeting. The following three proposed programs for 2026/27 were approved by the Board unanimously:

[Hear from elected local officials in 2027](#) - After the November 2026 election, LWVSCC will host discussion panels with newly elected and re-elected county officials from judges to county supervisors.

[Housing alternatives in Santa Cruz County](#) - Affordable housing in Santa Cruz County is hard to come by. LWVSCC will explore housing options from tiny homes to high-rise apartments.

[Local health issues](#) - A scarcity of local healthcare providers makes it hard for county residents to find physicians from primary care to specialists. With only two local hospitals, residents may have to travel far to get emergency care at a hospital that accepts their insurance. We will look at causes and solutions to local healthcare concerns.

Members will be voting on this proposed local program on Sunday June 28 at our Annual Meeting to be held at the Crow's Nest restaurant, Harbor Room, Santa Cruz. Details about the location, breakfast menu choices, agenda, and talk by featured speaker, Santa Cruz County Executive Officer, Nicole Coburn, to follow.

---Barbara Lewis, President LWVSCC

Meeting with Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas

On March 19, a group of League members from several counties met with Speaker Rivas to hear his priorities and positions:

Legislative priorities

[For the legislature as a whole](#): Priorities are largely an extension of the prior year. Affordability in California is a top priority. Our state's challenges are significant in housing, childcare, and energy. Some drivers of affordability are outside our control, such as those related to the war in Iran. The legislature is prioritizing the social safety net and protecting the social safety net and protecting the state from federal instability.

[Personal legislative priorities](#): As Speaker, his focus is often statewide and on elevating the work of colleagues. Partnership with Senator Laird has brought millions back into the region for environmental protection and to keep hospitals (such as Watsonville Community Hospital) open, for example. He is working hard to claw back funding that has been taken away by the federal government.

Water and Housing

The response emphasized that this should not be viewed as a competing issue. A significant portion of California's water is allocated to agriculture. While exact figures were not cited, the speaker noted that agricultural use far exceeds residential use. Efforts are underway to improve efficiency in agriculture through technology and conservation practices, including the concept of "natural working lands."

In contrast, water usage for households, cities, and counties is relatively small. Additionally, modern housing construction incorporates efficiency measures that support conservation. Therefore,

housing development and water sustainability are not inherently incompatible.

What is incompatible? Failure to build sufficient housing supply. This has contributed to California having the worst housing crisis. The speaker acknowledged Governor Newsom's leadership in prioritizing housing at the state level, including the creation of a Housing Accountability Unit to ensure local governments meet housing goals.

California's economy—driven in large part by innovation in Silicon Valley—has demonstrated the ability to solve complex challenges, including those related to housing efficiency. The issue now is having the political will to rethink how housing is developed. While preserving community character is important, there is also a responsibility to provide affordable housing for current and future generations.

At the same time, there must be caution in where and how development occurs. This includes avoiding environmentally sensitive areas and accounting for risks such as wildfires, flooding, and landslides. Water remains a long-standing issue across regions such as the Central Valley, San Joaquin Valley, and Coachella Valley, and climate change continues to exacerbate these challenges.

While agriculture is adapting by shifting to less water-intensive crops, addressing water sustainability is a long-term effort that will require continued policy evolution and leadership.

Immigration Enforcement

A question was raised regarding California's role in responding to federal immigration enforcement policies.

The speaker acknowledged this as a critical issue, particularly following recent federal actions. California has been on the front lines in responding to increased immigration enforcement, which has had economic impacts across key sectors such as hospitality,

agriculture, and home healthcare—industries heavily supported by immigrant workers.

In response, the state has taken proactive steps. Approximately \$50 million was allocated to establish a legal defense fund to challenge federal immigration policies. Of that, \$25 million was directed to nonprofit organizations that provide community-based support, including rapid response networks.

The state has filed over 50 legal actions against the federal government related to these issues. Additionally, legislators have worked to pass laws aimed at limiting enforcement activities in sensitive locations such as schools and hospitals.

Despite these efforts, the speaker noted ongoing challenges due to federal authority. However, the legislature and governor remain aligned in prioritizing protections, resources, and public safety for communities.

Livable Housing Development

Another question focused on how the state can ensure that affordable housing developments are livable—specifically, whether they include access to transportation, services, and amenities.

The response acknowledged that this is one of the most significant challenges in California's housing system. Currently, there is no comprehensive statewide master plan for housing development. While some local governments have created successful, walkable communities, these examples are not widespread.

Many communities still require residents to rely heavily on cars due to limited public transit and disconnected planning. In contrast, countries in Europe were cited as examples of integrated systems where residents can easily access daily needs without driving.

At the state level, recent reforms have focused on infill development, which promotes building housing near existing urban centers and amenities. Policies have

been streamlined to allow faster, “by-right” approvals for projects that meet certain criteria, encouraging more diverse and affordable housing options.

Additionally, there is a growing focus on modular and prefabricated housing as a way to reduce costs and accelerate construction timelines. Countries like Sweden were highlighted as examples of successful implementation of high-quality, affordable modular housing.

Ultimately, the goal is to create housing at various price points that align with residents’ incomes, reducing the financial burden of housing costs.

Earth Day is April 22nd

A Little History from the Earth Day Website

In the decades leading up to the first, Americans were consuming vast amounts of leaded gas through massive and inefficient automobiles. Industry belched out smoke and sludge with little fear of the consequences from either the law or bad press. Air pollution was commonly accepted as the smell of prosperity. Until this point, mainstream America remained largely oblivious to environmental concerns and how a polluted environment threatens human health.

However, the stage was set for change with the publication of Rachel Carson’s New York Times bestseller *Silent Spring* in 1962. The book represented a watershed moment, selling more than 500,000 copies in 24 countries as it raised public awareness and concern for living organisms, the environment and the inextricable links between pollution and public health.

Senator Gaylord Nelson, the junior senator from Wisconsin, had long been concerned about the deteriorating environment in the United States. Then in January 1969, he and many others witnessed the ravages of a massive oil spill in Santa Barbara, California. Inspired by the student anti-war movement, Senator Nelson wanted to infuse the energy of student anti-war protests with an emerging public consciousness about air and water pollution. Senator Nelson announced the idea for a

teach-in on college campuses to the national media, and persuaded Pete McCloskey, a conservation-minded Republican Congressman from the San Francisco Bay Area, to serve as his co-chair.

Senator Gaylord Nelson recruited Denis Hayes, a young activist, to organize the campus teach-ins and to scale the idea to a broader public, and they chose April 22, a weekday falling between Spring Break and Final Exams, to maximize the greatest student participation.

Recognizing its potential to inspire all Americans, Hayes built a national staff of 85 to promote events across the land and the effort soon broadened to include a wide range of organizations, faith groups, and others. They changed the name to Earth Day, which immediately sparked national media attention, and caught on across the country. Earth Day inspired 20 million Americans — at the time, 10% of the total population of the United States — to take to the streets, parks and auditoriums to demonstrate against the impacts of 150 years of industrial development which had left a growing legacy of serious human health impacts.

Groups that had been fighting individually against oil spills, polluting factories and power plants, raw sewage, toxic dumps, pesticides, freeways, the loss of wilderness and the extinction of wildlife united on Earth Day around these shared common values. Earth Day 1970 achieved a rare political alignment, enlisting support from Republicans and Democrats, rich and poor, urban dwellers and farmers, business and labor leaders.

By the end of 1970, the first Earth Day led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the passage of other first-of-their-kind environmental laws, including the National Environmental Education Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, and the Clean Air Act. Two years later congress passed the Clean Water Act.

1970

The dawn of the modern environmental movement. Earth Day 1970 became, and continues to be to this day, the largest secular day of protest in the world.

2020

Earth Day 2020 was the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day. Activations included activities such as the Great Global Clean Up, Citizen Science, Advocacy, Education, and Street Art. The year's theme for Earth Day 2020 was "Climate Action." Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the planned activities were moved online. Notably, EARTHDAY.ORG and a coalition of youth activists co-hosted Earth Day Live, a three-day livestream commemorating the 50th anniversary of Earth Day in the United States. In total, over 1 billion people worldwide participated in Earth Day actions, and 100 million observed the 50th anniversary in what is being referred to as the largest online mass mobilization in history.

What Stands has the League Taken?

LWVUS Statement

Since the 1960s, we have been at the forefront of efforts to protect air, land, and water resources. Our approach to environmental protection and pollution control is one of problem-solving. The League's environmental goals aim to prevent ecological degradation and to reduce and control pollutants before they go down the sewer, up the chimney or into the landfill. We support vigorous enforcement mechanisms, including sanctions for states and localities that do not comply with federal standards as well as substantial fines for noncompliance.

In 2023, we endorsed the Children's Climate Rights and Recovery Coalition, which recognizes the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on the health, economic opportunities, and fundamental rights of children and the need for a national, science-based climate recovery plan to meet necessary emissions reduction targets and stabilize the climate system.

The California League's Climate Change effort began in 2006 with the Berkeley-Albany-Emerlyville League and grew to encompass California with over 400 League members working on climate action. In 2020 the California Climate Interest Group joined with other Leagues across the U.S. to form the LWVUS Climate Interest Group.

Our California Climate Interest Group has four state-wide teams.

Water: California's Water Interest Group has been active for decades, working on understanding and influencing policy for surface waters, groundwater, water conveyance (canals), and, more recently, climate change and water. The group has members with deep knowledge of water issues with a focus on California.

Food, Soils & Agriculture: California's 77,500 farms and ranches produce more than 400 commodities and two-thirds of the nation's fruits and nuts. About one-quarter of what California produces is exported around the world. Currently natural and working lands are a net carbon emitter, but California's greenhouse gas emission (GHG) goals rely on changing lands to be a net carbon sink. In addition, food waste is a significant contributor to GHG emissions

Electrification: The use of renewables in electric power generation is increasing rapidly, so a move to electricity is a move away from fossil fuels. Currently California's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) has the goal to have 60% of all electricity sources to be carbon-free by 2030 and 100% by 2045. Electrification of vehicles and buildings are the targets for electrification. LWVUS has co-hosted EV events and is collaborating with the Building Electrification Coalition.

Climate Action Plans: Cities are on the front lines in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We must take action, not just plan. The Climate Action Plan Team has reviewed dozens of Climate Action Plans (CAPs) from cities and counties throughout the country to find the most effective actions and processes to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHGs).

Join the League's Climate Effort!

If you would like to join a team or just be informed of events like webinars, discussions, and book clubs, email lwvc@lwvc.org. The power that is the grassroots of the League is to speak with one well-informed voice.