



League of Women Voters Legislative Interview  
Office of Assemblymember Gail Pellerin.  
Assembly District 28

Gail Pellerin represents Santa Cruz County from the harbor north to the county line, Davenport, Bonny Doon, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, Felton, Ben Lomond, and Boulder Creek. She represents LosGatos, Monte Sereno, Willow Glen, Cambrian Village, South San Jose, the Almaden Valley, Coyote Valley, and Morgan Hill in Santa Clara County.

Thursday, January 23, 2025  
3:00 – 4:00 pm

League Members:

Linda Kling, Tom Picraux, Linda King, Patty Tennant- SWSCV  
Luigi Oliverio, Kathy Sutherland- LWV San Jose-Santa Clara

Rep. Pellerin was recovering from pneumonia; she was not contagious and had an onerous schedule last week in Sacramento due to urgent legislative deadlines. Nevertheless, she met with us a full hour.

Assemblyperson Gail Pellerin will be referred to as “GP” in this summary.

**Question 1. What major issues do you think the Legislature must deal with in 2025?**

**1.Addressing the fires in LA and fire preparedness/protection for the state**

GP announced two legislative actions today to address the state fire emergency. First, the legislature has approved 2.5 billion for the LA fires emergency response (AB4). These monies are a “bridge fund” that will be drawn from the state emergency reserves (which had an \$8.3 billion balance and now will have a \$5.8 billion balance). The second bill they passed was a senate resolution (SB3) to give 4 million for HCD grants for emergency relief to school district and disaster emergency operations.

Additionally. The legislature is addressing FAIR Plan Insurance sustainability. Fair Plan "is One. disaster away from imploding:” In order to cover the insurance costs, FAIR Plan will need to issue new state bonds to make up the difference between their cash flow (which is below 400M) and their liabilities, which is 25B. More work needs to be done to address this problem.

The state will be investigating the southern California fires.

## 2. Other Legislative Priorities

- GP: Protecting citizen civil rights, including LGBTQ, immigration protection, voting rights. There is much legislation in process. "California is committed to protecting citizens from the new forces at work in Washington DC." There is a new bill (Sen Weiner) to protect California residents from federal overreach. The Attorney General is filing lawsuits to protect California values
- Affordable housing
- Affordable child care
- Mental, physical health care

The deadline for submitting new ideas for bills to is tomorrow (January 24) to get them introduced by February. Thus there was a scramble in Sacramento this week.

### Question 2: What are your personal legislative priorities?

1. **Affordability** including food, childcare, education, health. These issue go beyond housing.
2. **Voter Rights Protection**  
As Chair of the Elections Committee, she is focused on preserving our democracy, election integrity and voter trust in the system. We already have guardrails in place, including voter ID and must push back on federal overreach. We need to gain the public trust in our system. The amount of fraud is miniscule.
3. **AI:** GP is "terrified" of the current direction AI is taking. She is continuing to work on AI through a multi-state working group. We need regulations and guardrails. She is trying to define the areas in law that allow good, not evil purposes for AI.
4. **Human trafficking:** Large scale events such as the coming L.A. Olympics and Super Bowl draw human traffickers. She has a bill that addresses trafficking.

5. **Affordable Housing:** GP has a bill to change the law to allow landlords to give preference to Section 8 applications.
6. **Mental Health.** She will continue to serve on the Mental Health committee. She wants to focus on different groups/communities and have emergency support available.

### **Question 3: How do you think the Legislature should address Wildfire disaster prevention, as well as wildfire disaster response?**

Catastrophe modeling. We have been underpaying the costs of catastrophe insurance. Homeowners are willing to pay more if it is comprehensive insurance, not just fire insurance as is FAIR Plan insurance. She hopes to see insurance companies coming back to California. The key is prevention of catastrophes including changes for new construction to make homes more fireproof. We need accurate predictions of frequencies of disasters so insurance companies can be confident of reasonable profits that keep them in California. Changes are needed.

Speaker Rivas, Assembly Rep. Lisa Calderon, and house Democrats are working on wildfire prevention, especially as it pertains to private utilities such as PG&E. A fire that started at the world's largest battery energy storage facility at Moss Landing is a wake-up call to the dangers. Plants such as that at Moss Landing must be placed with fire dangers taken into account. The legislature will be exploring the cause of this fire. Wildfires breaking into communities is of highest concern to District 28. "We have to stop and rethink."

### **QUESTION 4: Homelessness**

**Proposition 1, which passed in March 2024, aims to strengthen California's behavioral health system by funding mental health treatment, substance use disorder services, and supportive housing for veterans and individuals facing homelessness. What steps should the state legislature now take to address homelessness, provide more housing for the homeless and increase housing affordability for low-income citizens? (Note: California laws AB 2835 and AB 3057 were signed by Gov Newsome in August to help create more shelter beds for Californians and build more housing units faster. But it is not enough to solve the problem of homelessness.)**

Of deepest concern is that the largest segment of such people are now senior citizens. This is a humanity crisis. We are not seeing the improvements we expect from the dollars that have been spent. We need the right housing in the right places- housing that people need. There are many possibilities for solutions. As an example, you can now buy re-fab housing on Amazon and Walmart. But these are tiny houses that may not be approved by current/ local ordinances or meet union requirements. We need to restore local hearings and opportunities for local communities have a voice in that housing (see question 5 below). We need to give the power to the people who have feet on the

ground. Community organizations such as churches are doing a good job- they know the local needs and should have our support.

### **QUESTION 5: Public Hearings and Community Feedback:**

**The state legislature has enacted numerous laws limiting local control of land use in order to speed up the production of housing. These laws have also eliminated public hearings where residents historically could share their feedback regarding proposed development during planning commission and city council meetings. Do you support continuing eliminating public hearings or should public hearings be restored?**

GP: I am for public hearings **and** community voice. I am also pro housing. We need the right housing in the right places, housing that people need. Two-hour commutes are not right. Local communities need to understand the need for affordable housing so that our service workers, police, teachers, and firefighters can live in their communities.. Local jurisdictions must follow State law. Local housing needs can be met while still preserving local input and authority,

What are our next steps? We cannot continue to accept encampments on streets and waterways. We need to explore more temporary shelters rather than permanent housing. We also need to provide wrap-around services for the homeless. The largest group of homelessness is seniors. This is a humanity crisis. The state and cities have spent enormous sums on this problem, and we have not seen the improvements we anticipated. But we must continue to prioritize this problem.

### **Question 6: Immigration:**

**California is a Sanctuary State and AD 28 is home to acres of working agricultural land. ICE raids and the threat of them are causing terror in our communities. What immediate steps can California take to protect undocumented residents and agricultural workers?**

- **Are there any long-term strategies for the California legislature to consider?**
- **And, what efforts should the state make to defend immigrants against deportation attempts? Prohibit school officials and districts from cooperating with ICE? Provide legal aid to immigrants?**

GP: We will fight for our immigrant citizens. We value their labor and their contributions to our communities. GP works with the Welcoming Network in Santa Cruz. (Welcoming Network is dedicated to welcoming and supporting asylum seekers and other refugees in response to many abuses against them. They help with obtaining passports) Of

urgent concern is dealing with the effects of raids, with kids left behind. "It is evil to rip members of the community away." "We need legislation to help our fight."

What can the State do? To reduce the fear a little? It is at all levels of government. We will fight against immigration raids, especially at schools. We need 311 phone numbers for people to call if federal raids are taking place. We need "know your rights" cards to hand out with information regarding help, including how to get passports for children so they can travel. This is a key issue for the Latino caucus. GP calls up her contacts in Federal government, i.e. Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren and others, to communicate about this immediate threat to our immigrant community and undocumented individuals.

### **Question 7: Federal Funds**

**California and its local government entitles are going to have reduced federal spending that next four years. Historically, the Department of Finance has had inaccurate budget estimates. Scenario modeling is utilized to enable strategic decisions driven by data rather than hasty decisions. What is the department of finance doing today in order to manage the "what-if" scenarios of reduced federal funding?**

GP is confident that the state is prepared to address potential cutback of federal monies. However, there may be harsh realities. The state budget chair and his team are already deep diving into scenarios. They are incredibly competent and experienced. What will the Fed do? Cut off FEMA, Medicare? GP believes that we are prepared. Bottom line: California is an economic powerhouse. The Feds need us more than we need them. She is confident that our elected budget officials and the state officials will be able to handle whatever comes our way.

### **Wrap up:**

#### **GP wrapped up major concerns at the end of the meeting:**

The rest of the Nation needs California more than we need them. She has great faith in our Governor; he will take this on if the Federal government tries to withhold money that is California's share. The state will fight to protect people's rights.

A female lens is important. There are now 58 women in State Legislature. The Senate has a majority now, but that could be lost if a vacant seat is filled with a male.

Sign of trouble: People and volunteers are overwhelmed. Meals on Wheels now has a waiting list!

