

# VOTER



## FROM THE PRESIDENTS

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*

Thus spoke Margaret Mead and fifty years later her words are still relevant. A small group of thoughtful, committed citizens. If that doesn't describe the makeup of the League of Women Voters of Greater Los Angeles, nothing does. And it's the mission of The Voter to stimulate your thoughts and suggest ways of putting them into action. So let's get started.

March is Women's History Month, and while local television stations will commemorate the next thirty-one days with a graphic squeezed between ads for personal injury attorneys and weight loss syringes, your League will do more. Courtesy of the Civic Society, we're offering a stimulating discussion with Eunisses Hernandez, Councilmember District 1. Also this month we'll be contributing to the LWV US Federal Judiciary Study. LWV US is soliciting input from Leagues across the country and we will be holding a Consensus Meeting to finalize ours. Watch your email for more news.

Finally, (at least for March), you're encouraged to stand up for equal rights by participating in the Women's March and Rally on March 8th. While the League has no formal program planned, I suggest you gather up your friends, neighbors, and other League members and make your own event. Create signs. Design t-shirts. Buy a new pair of comfortable walking shoes. Then take the Metro to Pershing Square. Or, join the virtual event.

Don't forget to involve your kids, your grandkids, and your neighbors kids and grandkids. Make sure they understand that this struggle for equality and the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) is their struggle, too, because it will shape the world in which they will grow

## MARCH - APRIL 2025

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## DIVERSITY, EQUITY and INCLUSION POLICY

LWVGLA is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity, inclusion and racial justice in principle and in practice. The League offers a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment that is welcoming to all who are drawn to our mission and wish to make a positive impact.

## 988

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is for anyone experiencing suicidal thoughts, emotional distress, substance abuse issues or mental health problems.

*Share this number*

up and live.

It never hurts to recognize some of our “small group of committed citizens” whose leadership has spurred us on to deeper commitments as we strive to change the world for the better. That’s what we’ll do in April at our annual Celebrating Leadership Awards (CLA) event. It’s our yearly get-together when members and friends honor some of the people in the greater Los Angeles area who have distinguished themselves through their leadership in government, voting rights, public safety and services, education, and advocacy.

This year our three honorees are Patt Morrison, famous journalist, broadcaster, and author, who will receive the Leadership in Media award. Next, there’s our own member Valerie Morishige who will receive the Voting Rights Champion Award for her leadership in voter service.

The third honoree is...a surprise for right now. Watch your email for the official announcement coming in about three weeks.

While you’re waiting, this would be the perfect time to purchase tickets for CLA. Visit the [LWVGLA website](#) where you can point and click your way into the event. While you’re at the site, why not take out an ad or purchase a sponsorship and see your generosity recognized in the commemorative program.

And as long as we’re planning ahead, let’s take to heart the words of Zakiya Thomas of the ERA Coalition: *We come together to build muscle.*

Come together. Build muscle. Isn’t that a great description of what we do when we step up and take a leadership position in League. At our Annual Meeting in June (is it June already?) we’ll be electing some new Board of Directors and appointing next years’ committee chairs and co-chairs. If you want to flex your organizational muscle by filling one of these positions let Penny Sommers or Mary Dickson (our current co-presidents) know. (Their emails are [laurice.sommers@yahoo.com](mailto:laurice.sommers@yahoo.com) and [Mary@lwvlosangeles.org](mailto:Mary@lwvlosangeles.org) respectively.)

As we roll up our sleeves to prepare for what promises to be a seesaw of a fourth quarter, let’s take a breath, cherish our accomplishments so far, and double down on our commitment to use our power — our organizational muscle — to make the changes in the world we all want to see.

Onward Together.

In League,

## Mary & Penny

Mary L. Dickson, LWVGLA Co-President  
Laurice Penny Sommers, LWVGLA Co-President

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**LWV LAC ILO  
Convention**  
**Speaker: Kathryn Barger**  
**March 29, 2025**  
**9:00am to 12:00pm**

**LWVGLA Annual Meeting**  
**Date: June 14, 2025**  
***Save the Date***

**LWVC Convention 2025**  
**Dates: June 20 - 22**  
**Workshops & Events:**  
**June 17 - 20**  
***Save the Dates***

## COMMITTEE MEETINGS

**Meetings are held on ZOOM  
unless otherwise noted.**  
**Everyone is welcome to attend  
the meetings.**

***Committee on Criminal Justice  
Reform*** meets on the second  
Tuesday of the month at 3:00pm.  
Next meeting: Tuesday, March  
11  
Topic: Ethical Framework for AI

***Voter Service Committee***  
TBD

***Valley Book Club***  
Meets every other month on the  
second Wednesday.  
Next meeting: Wednesday,  
March 18 at 12:30pm  
Book: [James](#)

***Valley Unit Meeting***  
**Everyone is Welcome**  
Usually meets the third Thursday  
of the month.  
Next meeting: Thursday, March  
27 at 12:30pm  
Speaker: Judge Jeremy Fogel  
Topic: "What Exactly is the Rule  
of Law?"

***Development Committee***  
Meets the second Wednesday  
Next meeting: Wednesday,  
March 5 at 6:30pm

***Homelessness Action  
Committee***  
Regular meetings third Thursday  
Next meeting: Thursday, March  
20 at 7:00pm

***Glendale/Burbank Unit Meeting***  
Quarterly meetings, TBD

***Membership Committee***  
TBD

***Legislative Interviews***  
Interview dates and times will  
depend upon each elected



## FOR THE LOVE OF THE LEAGUE

**Lisa Robinson, Chair Membership Committee and LWVGLA Board Member**

LWVGLA members and LWV LAC members came to the League Office on February 15th to celebrate the League's birthday. Lisa Robinson supplied materials for creating cards, brought bagels and fixin's for snacking, and turned the office space into a party lounge for conversation.

**Loretta Kelly Denkins**



**Margo Reeg**



## CELEBRATING LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Celebrating Leadership Awards brings League members and friends together to honor leaders from the greater Los Angeles area who have demonstrated, through their professional and civic work, a dedication to the values and the goals upon which the League was established more than 100 years ago in 1920.

The League will celebrate our honorees on April 26th. Patt Morrison, a highly respected journalist, will receive the Leadership in Media Award. The League Legacy Valerie Morishige will receive the Voter Rights Champion Award. The third honoree is being kept confidential right now.

Purchase tickets [HERE](#)

Purchase an ad or a sponsorship that will be featured in the commemorative program [HERE](#)



## **GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION: A COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY**

**Brenda Macuil**  
**LWVGLA Intern**

Gun violence remains a pressing public health crisis in the United States, demanding urgent action. In 2021, firearms became the leading cause of death for children under 20. Currently, 4.6 million children live in homes with unlocked, loaded guns. In 2022, gun suicides reached a record high of 26,993 deaths.

In Los Angeles County, a child is killed or injured by gun violence every 30 hours. These numbers are more than statistics, they are lives lost, families shattered, and communities forever changed. We cannot afford to stand by. Now is the time to take action.

As the League of Women Voters of Greater Los Angeles, we are committed to raising awareness and empowering individuals to be part of the solution. By working together, we can advocate for stronger policies, promote safety measures, and support communities in preventing gun violence.

### **Here's how you can get involved:**

#### Educate Yourself on GVROs

Learn how Gun Violence Restraining Orders can help prevent harm. Watch a training video to learn how to recognize warning signs and understand how to take action.

- Warning signs of suicide risk include giving away personal possessions, discussing "goodbyes," and organizing personal affairs or paying off debts.

#### Store Firearms Safely

If you own a gun, store it securely, locked, and separate from ammunition to prevent unauthorized access.

- Get a Free Gun Lock at participating LA County Medical Centers and Libraries (limit two per family).
- Request a gun lock:
- Learn safe storage methods:

#### Debunk Gun Violence

Myths Misinformation can prevent effective action. Learn the facts about gun violence and common misconceptions.

- Read the Gun Violence Myth Buster: [Click here](#).

#### Join a Gun Violence Prevention Coalition

Connect with local organizations working to reduce gun violence, such as:

- Sandy Hook Promise
- Brady United
- Bullet Points Project

By learning the signs, advocating for change, and taking action, we can all contribute to reducing



Andrea Welsing, Director of LA County's Office of Violence Prevention, was the guest speaker for the January meeting of LWVGLA's Committee on Criminal Justice Reform. Ms. Welsing guided us to the Los Angeles County Public Health, which was the resource for this article.

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## MEET LEAGUE LEADER CAROLINA GOODMAN

**Carolina Goodman, Chairperson of Criminal Justice Reform Committee and  
Chairperson of Government Reform Committee**



The League of Women Voters of Greater Los Angeles provides many opportunities for people to contribute to their local community, as well as to strengthen democracy.

During my career in education, I found Service Learning to be one of the most effective ways for students to integrate academic knowledge with real world experiences. In 2013, Zhita Rea, long-time member of the League of Women Voters, inspired me to join her in collaborating with a number of LAUSD high school teachers and their students to identify community issues, research possible solutions, and design a way to implement solutions. Schools sent student representatives to an event at City Hall, where they shared their projects with each other, and met Mayor Garcetti and a number of city councilmembers.

In 2014, I joined a committee on Human Trafficking led by another seasoned League member, Jean Thomson. We collaborated with the Los Angeles Police Department, LA County's Sheriff Department, LAUSD, and a number of local organizations, such as the [Coalition Against Slavery and Trafficking](#) and [Journey Out](#) to organize public forums in different venues around the city. We partnered with the [National Council of Jewish Women](#) on a project to post informational signs in hospital emergency rooms, urgent care centers, and bars. We learned that people are not only trafficked from other countries but are also recruited from our high schools.

During the summer of 2015, LWVGLA member Marjorie Green enlisted Zhita, Jean, and me to launch the Community Policing Committee (now the Committee on Criminal Justice Reform). We interviewed LA Police Department officials and leaders of community-based organizations, organized a public forum at Loyola Law School, and worked to update LWVLA's Position on Policing. Other local Leagues throughout California had expressed a broad interest in justice reform, not just policing. Together, we formed the LWVC Criminal Justice Interest Group, which developed LWV California's [Position on Criminal Justice](#). At the 2022 LWVUS Convention, the position was adopted so that all state and local Leagues can use it to support their advocacy work. We are currently monitoring changes to LA City's Charter and the implementation of LA County's Measure G to expand the number of supervisorial districts, establishing an elected county administrator, and creating a county ethics commission.

LWVGLA also has an internship program. I have enjoyed supervising college students from UCLA, USC, Loyola Marymount, Cal Poly, Pepperdine, Pomona College, and Scripps College. It is a reciprocal relationship. Students have hands-on experience in "making democracy work" and LWVGLA benefits from their research and technology

skills, as well as their participation in our efforts in criminal justice reform and government reform.

Who else am I besides an LWVGLA volunteer? I love knitting. I am always in the middle of two library books – fiction on audio and nonfiction on a Kindle for note taking. Don and I recently celebrated our 50th anniversary. We're so proud of our two sons and their families. Jeff is a school psychologist in San Diego. Jeremy teaches math at College of the Canyons. It's wonderful fun attending grandchildren's activities – soccer, gymnastics, ballet, piano. Our oldest grandson is a freshman at CSU Chico studying mechatronics (science of robotics).

## MEET LWVGLA INTERN SOPHIA SAHAGUN

**SOPHIA SAHAGUN, LWVGLA Intern from University of California, Los Angeles  
Communications Committee**



I'm a Senior at UCLA, majoring in Political Science with a minor in Entrepreneurship. I've always been passionate about democratic participation, and I'm thrilled to be interning with the League to help make voter education more accessible and impactful.

I wanted to intern with the League because of its commitment to nonpartisan voter education and advocacy for all individuals. Through this experience, I plan to gain hands-on experience in community outreach, voter education, and policy research while strengthening my communication skills to better support voter engagement efforts.

After graduation, I plan to pursue a career in campaign development, where I can create impactful strategies, inspire action, and achieve meaningful results. Eventually,

I will attend law school to specialize in criminal law, ensuring that the justice system represents and protects all members of our society.

Outside of my studies and this internship, I love reading, spending time with friends, and attending concerts and festivals. This internship has been an incredible opportunity to learn and contribute to something bigger than myself. I am greatly appreciative of the experience.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO LEAGUE LEADERS

**CAMERON MANNING, LWVGLA Board Member**

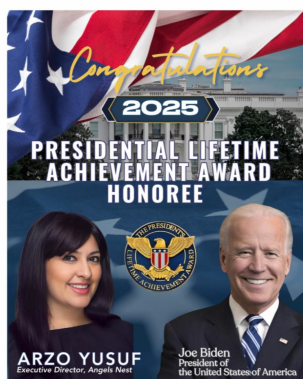


I'm honored to be named a Steinberg Institute Fellow and contribute to advancing mental health policy in California.

Through my ongoing research at the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, I'm leveraging quantitative analysis, predictive machine learning models, and geospatial techniques to estimate the prevalence of mental illness across California. My work focuses on identifying behavioral health disparities and translating data-driven insights into actionable policy interventions.

This fellowship presents a valuable opportunity to apply empirical research to shape evidence-based policies that address systemic challenges in behavioral health. Excited to work with my fellow

Steinberg Institute Fellows - Gustavo Medrano, Kelsey McGillis, Dominique Taylor, Gianna Radeljic, and Andrea Elser as we work toward innovative solutions in mental health policy.



## **CONGRATULATIONS TO LEAGUE LEADERS**

### **ARZO YUSUF, LWVGLA Board Member**

Angels Nest is proud to celebrate Executive Director, Arzo Yusuf, for her work and dedication to the foster youth community. Arzo was recently honored with the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award by President Biden just before he left office in 2025. She received this award for her commitment to service in uplifting current/former foster youth through the Resource Navigator Program at Angels Nest. This award is one of the highest honors a person can receive in the United States.

During a round table meeting with Congresswoman Sydney Kamlager-Dove, President Biden appointee Michael D. Smith (former CEO of AmeriCorps), and iFoster CEO Serita Cox, the Angels Nest team of former foster youth spoke about being resource navigators uplifting other foster youth in Los Angeles by connecting their peers to resources for rent, housing, books for school, tuition and other life emergencies through the Angels Nest Resource Navigator Program. This program was made possible through the support of Americorps in partnership with iFoster which led to Arzo receiving the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award.

We asked Arzo about her award and she said, "I feel incredibly grateful to have been selected for such a high honor. Service to my community is an important value that I've lived by my entire life. But to be in a country where not only is service valued, but celebrated in such a meaningful way by The Office of the President of the United States is truly remarkable and a testament to the culture and strength of America."

Aside from her work with Angels Nest, Arzo's been a longtime advocate for youth experiencing foster care. Her dedication to this cause inspired her documentary film, *Breaking the Cycle* and the TED Talk, *End Sex Trafficking By Helping Foster Youth*.

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## **LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEWS SUMMARIES**

**Ann-Marie Holman, Co-Chair Legislative Interviews and LWVGLA Board Member**

### **Interviews with LA-area State Legislators: Part 1**

From January through March, the League of Women Voters of Greater Los Angeles interviewed State Senators and Assemblymembers representing the LA area about their legislative priorities for 2025. These interviews were part of a larger project led by the State of California League, to gather info about what the legislature is working on and inform future League advocacy efforts.

Every legislator we spoke with was deeply concerned about the wildfires, and was prioritizing recovery efforts. We also discussed some of these representatives' other areas of interest.

Interview highlights are featured below and in upcoming issues of *The Voter*.

**Senator Maria Elena Durazo (SD26) - Central City and East LA**

<https://sd26.senate.ca.gov/>

During her long career, Senator Durazo has shown a commitment to advocating for low-income families and working people. She says that her current concerns are for supporting individuals and families that have been particularly vulnerable to the fires, wage theft, and price and rent-gouging.

The Senator is very sensitive to the broad-ranging ripple effects that proposed legislation can have, and emphasizes that solutions must be integrated, rather than siloed, as a result. For example, California wants more EVs on the road, but how does that impact low-income families? An equitable solution must take a holistic approach to this issue.

### **Senator Lola Smallwood-Cuevas (SD28) - South LA, Culver City, USC**

<https://sd28.senate.ca.gov/>

A proud member of the League of Women Voters, Senator Smallwood-Cuevas stated that she is committed to “holding the line” on civil rights in California, against attacks from the current federal administration. As Chair of the Labor, Public Employment, and Retirement Committee, workers’ rights are a focal point for the Senator, as is making California a more affordable place to live. She noted that resources can be put into working families’ pockets by taking people out of the social services safety net and putting them to work on capital projects, so that human infrastructure is being built while at the same time, pressure on the safety net is alleviated.

The Senator is also concerned about creating pipelines for incarcerated women to move toward employment via skill-building training and apprenticeship programs. Currently, these types of opportunities exist for incarcerated men, but not for women.

### **Assemblymember Isaac Bryan (AD55) - West Adams, Mid City, South Robertson, Ladera Heights, Leimert Park, Mar Vista, Culver City**

<https://a55.asmdc.org/>

Like other State legislators, Assemblymember Bryan is focused on wildfire recovery efforts. As an advocate for creating systems that really work for marginalized people, he is also supporting paying a fair wage to incarcerated firefighters, as they are currently drastically underpaid for their dangerous labor.

Other proposals the Assemblymember is working on include setting a drinking limit for police officers carrying service weapons; supporting foster children and the child welfare system; and adding training on how to respond when pulled over by police to the CA drivers licensing process.

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## **ERA RESOURCES**

### **What is the status of the ERA?**

- The ERA has met all ratification requirements and is therefore a valid part of the Constitution “to all intents and purposes,” according to Article V of the Constitution.
- The ERA was introduced by suffragist Alice Paul in 1923. It was passed by Congress in 1972 with more than the necessary 2/3 vote in both chambers, and in 2020 it passed the 38-state threshold (¾ of states) for ratification.
- On January 17, 2025, President Biden released a White House statement affirming that the ERA is the law of the land.

### **Resources for all and some specifically for young people**

- Alice Paul Center for Gender Justice [alicepaul.org](http://alicepaul.org)
- Documentary film **Ratified**
- ERA Coalition <https://www.eracoalition.org/about/>



- Book and podcast **Ordinary Equality** by Kate Kelly

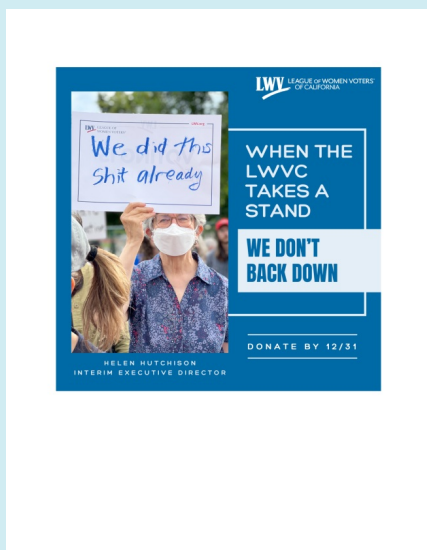
## THANK YOU TO THOSE PEOPLE WHO JOINED THE ECONOMIC BOYCOTT

These are additional dates for new boycotts.

March 7-14 Amazon Boycott  
March 21-28 Nestle Boycott  
April 7-14 Walmart Boycott  
April 18 Economic Blackout 2  
April 21-28 General Mills Boycott  
May 6-12 Amazon Boycott  
May 20-26 Walmart Boycott  
June 3-9 Target Boycott  
June 24-30 McDonalds Boycott  
July 4 Independence Day

## LETTER FROM HELEN HUTCHISON

Helen Hutchison, Interim Executive Director  
League of Women Voters of California



We live in perilous political times, where many of our most fundamental rights are at risk. One very troubling issue that might fly under the radar, is that Congressional leaders and Trump administration allies have repeatedly called for a **Constitutional Convention**, rallying dozens of states to their cause. Holding one would present an incalculable threat to the Constitutional protections that safeguard the rights of Californians. A Convention could rewrite our Constitution with no guardrails, opening the door to radical agendas that threaten voting rights, civil liberties, and equality. California currently has seven open calls for a Constitutional Convention. This creates a dangerous pathway for these efforts—one that could have catastrophic consequences. Just days ago, President Trump issued an executive order aimed at stripping U.S. citizenship from people born in this country if their parents weren't citizens.

That's why the League of Women Voters of California took action, **with your support**. We're sponsoring Senate

Joint Resolution 1 (SJR-1) to rescind California's calls for a Constitutional Convention and shut down this potential attack on our democracy. But we can't do it alone. Your support for the **LWVC Action Fund** fuels this urgent advocacy, and so much more. It allows us to fight back, defend our rights, and ensure that democracy remains in the hands of the people—not special interests or extremist politicians. Friend, you're helping us resist and fight back.

Can we count on you? A **donation** today helps us continue this critical work. The stakes couldn't be higher, but together, we can stand up for democracy. Thank you for being part of this fight.  
With gratitude,

Helen Hutchison

## STATE OF THE LEAGUE 2025 ADDRESS

DIANNA WYNN, President, League of Women Voters of US

LWVUS Board President Dianna Wynn addressed League members on the state of the League in 2025. Click the link to play [this video](#).

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[www.lwvlosangeles.org/](http://www.lwvlosangeles.org/)

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