



# The Voter

## THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF MENDOCINO COUNTY

November, 2020

Cindy Plank and Nancy Kleiber, Presidents

Jary Stavely and Lee Tepper, Editors

*November meeting ...*

## Election Dissection

Scapel, please! Join us on November 17 at 6 PM via Zoom for an autopsy on the election. Help us figure out “What Happened Here” from a two-week hindsight perspective. We'll take a clinical look at four major topics:

- The election process in Mendocino County;
- a final update on the census locally;
- the Electoral College; and
- the fate of Proposition 15.

Viewers will be invited to ask questions and give comments throughout the presentation. League Co-President Nancy Kleiber will moderate.

First, the meeting will focus on the election experience in Mendocino County, with a report from our Elections office. Clerk-Recorder Katrina Bartolomie will provide an overview of what happened at county polling stations, the collection and counting of absentee ballots, the numbers of voters in 2020 compared to previous years, and any discernible trends in the demographics of registered voters.

Next, Paula Cohen will report on the windup of the census, the final response rate in various areas of the county, and how this count in the midst of the pandemic compares with previous ones.

Charlene McAllister will broaden the focus into a review of how the electoral college is organized, how its electors are actually chosen, and the dates and deadlines it is required to meet.

Lastly, Cindy Plank will give information on the fate of Proposition 15, the California League's long-anticipated attempt to reform the Howard Jarvis inspired Prop 13 of 1978—how its passage will affect our future government finances, *and/or* what to look for in the aftermath of its defeat.

Please join the conversation ([here's the link](#)), and invite your friends and neighbors to do so as well.

## Vote-in-Person Checklist

- Your vote-by-mail ballot in its envelope*
- Mask
- Hand sanitizer
- Patience
- A smile for poll workers

List of drop-off boxes/polling places  
in Mendocino County:

<https://www.mendocinocounty.org/home/showdocument?id=37484>

## LWW Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, strives to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

President’s message ...

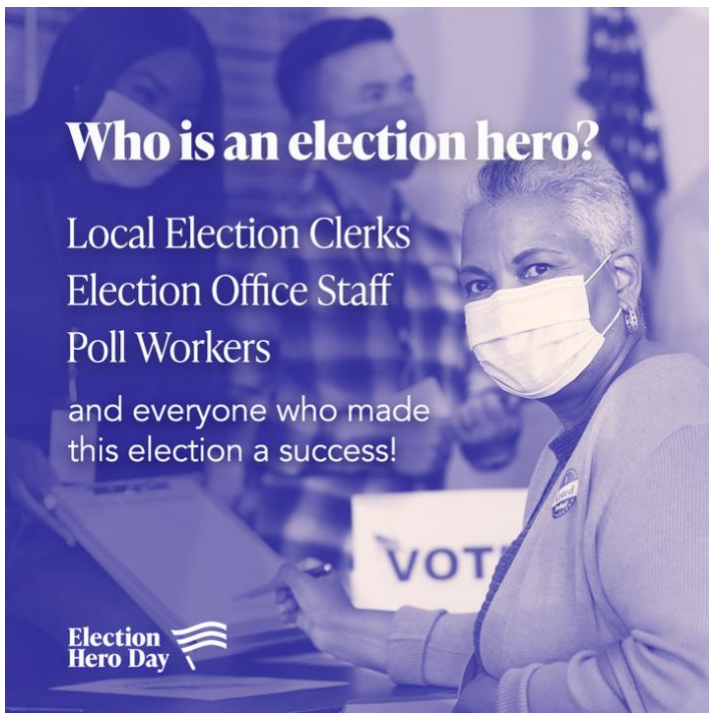
# Vote, vote, vote! IF YOU HAVEN’T, DO IT NOVEMBER 3

by Nancy Kleiber

On me, the pleas to vote are wasted. Having already voted, I wish there were some way to signal that fact to the torrent of emailers, texters, callers and TV/Radio advertisers: “Hey! I already voted, so l-e-a-v-e me a-l-o-n-e!” The cynical side of me also wishes there were some way to convince our ‘corporate citizens’ backing or opposing propositions in the app-based ride-sharing/food delivery industry (\$203M), and the dialysis clinic industry (\$105+M), and the bail bond industry (\$10+M), that if they had spent all or even some of that money on cleaning up and reforming their industry, they wouldn’t be targets of legislation, court actions and citizen initiatives. Did you know that California ranks number one in the nation on money spent on ballot propositions? So far this year, the California pros & cons collectively have spent \$708.2 million. Second in the nation is Illinois where initiative/referendum spending this election is a paltry (by comparison) \$121.2 million. That’s on ballot propositions—don’t get me started on the money being spent by candidates and the super-PACs. So much for the dark side.



For me, this election is confirmation of the democratic process. It validates our foremothers’ and -fathers’ fight for the right to vote. Amidst the noise and clamor of the opinion shapers, the parties, the media and even the foreign influencers, we have the chance and, hopefully, the will, to express our quiet but powerful voice—one vote at a time. It has the effect of a tsunami. I remember when the Fukushima tsunami hit Noyo harbor. There was no huge thirty foot tidal wave, but the force of a small three inch rise of the incoming ocean was enough to do massive damage to the harbor. Similarly, your vote counts as an unstoppable force for good—do it!



## You Are an Absentee Voter

Every voter in California has been mailed an absentee ballot (vote-by-mail ballot). This is your **one** official ballot. You need to bring it – and its envelope – to the polling place with you if you choose to vote in person. If you forget or lose it, you will have to vote a provisional ballot, and those ballots could be in short supply. Remember, even on November 3 you can still use the official drop locations at Fort Bragg City Hall and other places.

Don’t forget you can report any problems at the polls at

**866-OUR-VOTE**

or to the Elections department at

**707-234-6819**

Thanks to all those who contribute to making our elections free and fair. Election Heroes Day is November 2.

# Election Coverage: a Consumer Guide

by Dorine Real

*This article is based on a piece by Vivian Schiller and Garrett M. Graff in the Columbia Journalism Review, (October 19, 2020) which was aimed at journalists.*

**Elections** in a democracy aren't only about tallying votes to declare a winner—they are just as much about convincing the losers that they actually lost—and that the process was free, fair, and secure enough that the losers can accept the result as legitimate.

The possibility of a long gap before the winner becomes clear, and the very real fear that the apparent loser of the November 3 vote (and his supporters) will declare that the results aren't legitimate, has forced news organizations to think deeply in advance about how they should responsibly report and frame the unofficial tallies they'll gather on election night.

Here are ten clear principles to keep in mind as you watch/read election night coverage:

- 1. Problems are not failures.** There will be actors trying to convince the public that every small error is evidence of a rigged system. In fact, normal stuff goes wrong on Election Day: there are machines that don't work, polling places that lose power or open late, voter rolls that get mis-delivered. There are upwards of 230,000 polling places in the US, so even in an election during which 99.9 percent of precincts operate perfectly, there will be hundreds of problems. Social distancing efforts may make even relatively short, fast-moving lines appear unmanageable, stretching hundreds of feet down the block. Don't conclude that such "regular" problems may lead to fraudulent or invalid results.  
At the same time, systemic problems need to be faced. Certain jurisdictions have a documented history of voter suppression and obstructing minority voters. Today, states are cutting back on [ballot access](#) and there are [hours-long lines](#) for early voting appearing in places like Georgia. This year will be the first time since the 1990s that the Republican Party will not be under a federal consent decree limiting its ability to conduct so-called "ballot security" efforts—like challenging the ability of individual voters to participate on Election Day, and President Trump is calling for his supporters to "self-monitor" polling places. There is the possibility that there will be widespread problems on Election Day that are both important to cover and yet, taken together, still do not rise to the level of invalidating or delegitimizing the election results
- 2. Know the calendar.** The public has been conditioned to expect a winner within hours of the polls closing, but the numbers collected on election night are not necessarily decisive. There are three dates that matter:
  - a. each state's own individual deadline for certifying the vote count, which is usually two to three weeks after election day;
  - b. the federal so-called "safe harbor" date on **December 8**, by which a state has to settle all post-election legal challenges; and,
  - c. most important, the national **December 14** meeting of the Electoral College.Just because a state takes a week or two—or longer—to finalize results, that doesn't jeopardize the integrity of the system.
- 3. Watch the media's use of language.** The media "projects" winners; it should not "declare" a winner, "call" a race, or "count" a vote. In reporting tallies, news organizations should explain what they know, how they know it, and what they don't know yet. Notice, for instance, the difference between pre-election "processing" of absentee/mail-in ballots and pre-election "counting" of votes, and how those vary by state.
- 4. Remember how this year will be different.** Many states are going to struggle to understand their "denominator"—that it is, how many total ballots have been cast. The denominator is critical for media organizations to project a winner because it allows them to understand how many ballots are left to count. In past years, absentee or mail-in ballots in many states accounted for a small fraction (circa 3 to 5 percent) of the total, but this year, that number might soar to 30 percent or more, making it much harder to make early predictions.

5. **Prepare for a possible shift.** Some races (and entire states) that look close on election night might not end up close at all, and what looks like an early lead might evaporate.
6. **Look at vote counts and election numbers in context.** For example, avoid “precincts left to report”; instead, look at “votes that have been received.” Precincts may report in-person v. absentee votes separately, so vote totals might shift well after “100 percent of precincts are reporting.” Similarly, when looking at areas of trouble, contested ballots, or potential problems, get the full picture. In Georgia, many stories this fall noted that there were 1,000 people who “double voted” in this year’s primary. But notice that those 1,000 “double voters” represented just .09 percent of the roughly one million total votes; the double-votes were caught by the very mechanisms in place to prevent such instances; and, as far as investigators have found, only one of the “double voters” was known to have malign intentions.
7. **Results aren’t “late” simply because the winner isn’t known on election night.** If the presidential election is a blowout, we’ll know that Tuesday night or Wednesday—but if it’s close, it’s entirely appropriate, normal, and lawful for the counting to continue for days or weeks. What you think is “slow” actually isn’t—it’s a system functioning as expected to deliver a legitimate result.
8. **Don’t parrot premature claims of victory.** Don’t allow candidates to inject uncertainty or cast unfounded aspersions about the legitimacy of results simply by being first out of the gate to declare victory.
9. **Hold officials accountable while maintaining confidence in the election system as a whole.** The news media should provide transparency and accountability about problems as they arise without unduly indicting the entire system. The Post Office’s challenges don’t invalidate the legitimacy of vote-by-mail in general. Mass vote fraud, for all intents and purposes, is logistically impossible; even meaningful localized voter fraud is vanishingly rare and historically improbable. At the same time, be mindful that Black voters and other underrepresented groups have been historically disenfranchised via voter ID laws, longer wait times, and restrictions that bar people with felony convictions from voting.  
Remember, too, that “problems” often point to solutions: a recent press release about nine irregular ballots in Pennsylvania should have been framed not as a systemic failure but as that the system is working—an irregularity in voting was discovered, investigated, and remediated, just as the electoral system intends. Similarly, in California, after the state GOP erected the unofficial drop boxes, the state attorney general moved to block them and secure any ballots already deposited in them. The potential for voter fraud was minimized by the system, as intended.
10. **Prepare with information.** Learn all you can about the process and gather trusted resources to answer the many questions that will come up.

## Still Time to Pay Your Dues

*by Jary Stavelly*

I would again like to thank all those who have sent their dues in during September and October. Since we are only having online meetings this fall, you won’t be able just to pull out your checkbook when you come in person to one of our meetings, as you may have been in the habit of doing. So, please, if you haven’t yet submitted them, remember to do it at home. Those who send them soon will save us the time and expense of sending out extra snail mail appeals.

The amount remains the same—\$60 for an individual membership, \$90 for a two-member household. It’s fine to contribute more or less. More helps fund our local budget; contributing less can also do so, if you don’t mind forgoing official membership in the state and national leagues. Checks may be mailed to P.O. Box 1128, Fort Bragg, CA. 95437. Thanks to all for your ongoing support of informed voting and good government.

## Honoring the Land We Are On

The national League has been encouraging local units to include an acknowledgment of the occupation of native lands at their events and meetings. An organization called the U.S. Department of Arts & Culture has a webpage offering advice on how to do it ([usdac.us/nativeland](https://usdac.us/nativeland)), and a [webinar](#) on the subject was given by the LWVUS in July:

For example, the Santa Barbara League has used the national office advice to incorporate the following language into its public forums:



*Elsie Allen weaving a basket*

*We'd like to take a few moments to honor the land we are on and its native people. Doing so is important for a few reasons:*

- *To offer recognition and respect.*
- *To counter the "doctrine of discovery" with the true story of the people who were already here.*
- *To support larger truth-telling and reconciliation efforts.*
- *To remind ourselves that colonization is an ongoing process.*
- *To take a cue from Indigenous protocols that call for opening spaces with reverence and respect.*

*The Chumash people once numbered in the tens of thousands and lived along the coasts of California. The modern-day towns of Santa Barbara, Montecito, Summerland, and Carpinteria were carved out of the old Chumash territory. Through centuries of hardships and abuse, the Chumash people have overcome all odds in order to thrive on the land of their ancestors once more. We recognize and honor the Chumash people as the first people of this region who have contributed so much richness and wisdom to the environment, culture and community of Santa Barbara.*

*Please take a few moments of silence to reflect on and honor the Chumash people.*

Local League Vice President Dorine Real reacted, "I particularly like the inclusion of the reasons this acknowledgement is important. It's also an

indirect acknowledgement of the fact that our shared responsibility for, and dependence on, the land where we live is one foundation of the bond that makes it possible for us to do democracy together."

Mendocino County was the original home for a number of different indigenous cultures, and the Round Valley concentration of peoples brought even more of them together, so a statement for local League meetings may vary somewhat from this model. If you have thoughts or suggestions about how to word a statement for local League meetings, please share them with a board member or write to [voter@mcn.org](mailto:voter@mcn.org).

## Some Historical Roots of Voter Suppression

*The following is condensed from an article in Supermajority News, shared by Cindy Plank.*

Black and minority communities across the United States consistently face barriers to voting that their white counterparts generally don't. [A 2019 Washington University study found that](#) minority communities are more likely to have poor signage at polling places, untrained or poorly [trained](#) poll workers, faulty or insufficient voting equipment, and lack of voter assistance. [A 2020 Brennan Center study found](#) that Black voters wait 45 minutes longer than white voters on average, and that Black voters also found it [three times more difficult to locate polling places on Election Day](#), partially due to frequently moving polling sites.

One of the issues which contribute to voter suppression in black communities is redlining, a practice by which banks have denied mortgages to creditworthy Black Americans based purely on where they lived. Redlining was banned in 1968 when Congress passed the Fair Housing Act the same week civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. It is often seen as one of the great legislative achievements of the civil rights era. But the effects of this racist practice of redlining still persist today. Thanks to the racial segregation it created, minority neighborhoods are easy to identify and target for voter suppression tactics. "Many Black Americans live in urban areas where election administration is stretched thin to a greater degree than in many other places. And so, particularly in urban areas where political leaders have restricted funding, election officials struggle to find enough resources," David Kimball of Missouri University told *Supermajority News*. Besides inadequate voting resources, many states have seen sweeping poll closures in minority communities, which redlining made easier to target.

When [the Supreme Court struck down key parts of the Voting Rights Act in 2013](#), states were no longer required to prove that they were not closing polling locations as an act of racial discrimination. Almost immediately, officials across 13 states shuttered [nearly 1,700 voting precincts](#). According to a report by The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, [many of these shutdowns targeted black and Latino communities](#). "For many people, and particularly for voters of color, older voters, rural voters, and voters with disabilities, these burdens make it harder — and sometimes impossible — to vote," the study states. [When the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights](#) began investigating the reasons behind these closures, they concluded that these voting procedure changes disproportionately limit minority citizens' ability to vote.

## Diversity Awareness Resources

The League's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) study group has shared some suggestions for November:

A story about indigenous land acknowledgement [*see article on p.5*] at Cal State Northridge: [csunshinetoday.csun.edu/arts-and-culture/were-still-here-land-acknowledgement-strengthens-bond-between-csun-and-fernandeno-tataviam-band/](https://csunshinetoday.csun.edu/arts-and-culture/were-still-here-land-acknowledgement-strengthens-bond-between-csun-and-fernandeno-tataviam-band/).

A visual essay on the importance of interracial friendships from the PBS Newshour: [pbs.org/newshour/show/an-essay-on-the-importance-of-interracial-friendships](https://pbs.org/newshour/show/an-essay-on-the-importance-of-interracial-friendships).

An article on how racism can be embedded in the technology of social media from The Atlantic: [theatlantic.com/family/archive/2020/10/algorithmic-bias-especially-dangerous-teens/616793/](https://theatlantic.com/family/archive/2020/10/algorithmic-bias-especially-dangerous-teens/616793/)

And a Ted Talk about the origin of the concept of "white people": [ted.com/talks/john\\_biewen\\_the\\_lie\\_that\\_invented\\_racism](https://ted.com/talks/john_biewen_the_lie_that_invented_racism).

*Last month's meetings ...*

## **Ballot Information Presented**

The Mendocino County League held three online meetings in October concerning the November election. Four candidates for the Mendocino Coast Recreation & Parks District board participated in a forum on October 6. Eleven League members presented pros and cons of the twelve state propositions on October 13. And Laurel Fedor, who grew up on the coast, hosted an informational session in favor of Proposition 15 on October 14. Thanks are due to Voter Services Chair Carol Czadek and to Zoom maven Dorine Real for organizing the first two sessions, and to Co-President Cindy Plank for arranging the last one.

Although a recording of the candidates' forum is not available, the Advocate-News report on it can be found at: <http://www.advocate-news.com/2020/10/06/coast-recreation-and-parks-candidates-participate-in-qa/>.

View the Pros & Cons presentation through the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/cW-j1MMEwCNFqT8kn-yjip6MPfiJzfLbsGgFF3s6J6Enh5Y0dV3gRti7dcyjb5kx.DlO4ziFJjuZaHrcn>.

“Proposition 15—All of Your Questions Answered” can be accessed at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/EjWWs2LRjh2oiCBu7Wf5l0hsEIxRs2Bz7dxFwst5G6yTHvCvftSLWLSP4sJodce.awPfmgy3EPb7Wj?startTime=1602724160000>

## **League Voter Protection Action Around the Country**

***League sends letter urging postal service to continue longstanding practice of placing voter registration forms in postal offices.*** Amid reports that local post offices in the Houston, Texas area declined to place voter registration forms in their lobbies, citing a “directive” from the Postmaster General, the League of Women Voters of the United States and the League of Women Voters of Texas sent a letter to Postmaster General Louis DeJoy demanding that the Postal Service continue their longstanding practice of displaying and providing voter registration forms and postcards in post offices across the country.

***League CEO urges voters to make sure their ballots are counted.*** As of October 26, an estimated 52 million absentee ballots that were requested had not yet been returned. With a little over one week until Election Day, hand delivery remains the most secure and quick way to make sure your ballot is counted. Virginia Kase advised voters on ABC News to drop off their ballots in the mail as soon as possible or at an official drop box: <https://abcn.ws/2FTt6jy>.

***Arkansas League sues to keep redistricting proposal on ballot.*** The fight for People Powered Fair Maps in Arkansas continued in October with a federal lawsuit requesting that 150,000 voters' voices be heard concerning a non-partisan redistricting proposal disqualified by the Secretary of State.

***Lawsuit concerning undocumented residents in the census now goes to the US Supreme Court.*** On October 23 a federal judge ruled in *City of San Jose, California v. Trump* that the president's executive order to block undocumented individuals from being counted in the U.S. Census is unconstitutional.

***SCOTUS issues decision against voter access in Wisconsin.*** On October 26 the US Supreme Court denied the *Gear v. Wisconsin State Legislature* plaintiffs' application, declining to restore Wisconsin's back-up option for voters who do not receive their requested absentee ballots in the mail.

***Federal judge rules South Carolina must not reject ballots for signature issues.*** On October 27 a federal judge ruled in favor of LWV of South Carolina to establish a “notice and cure” process for absentee ballots flagged for rejection due to a missing signature.

***Federal judge halts planned voter intimidation in Minnesota.*** On October 29 a federal district court judge ruled in favor of CAIR-MN and LWV of Minnesota, granting a preliminary injunction in a move that prohibits private mercenary contractor Atlas Aegis from moving forward with its illegal voter intimidation plans in the state.

## Behavioral Health: A Supervisor's Perspective

by Ted Williams

*In accordance with the League's interest in behavioral health in Mendocino County, here is a letter from 5th District Supervisor Ted Williams regarding his current understanding of the situation:*

In my short experience as county supervisor, the most anguishing moments have been off camera, far removed from bow-tie Tuesday. At times, tears have been the natural response to constituent stories of hardship born out of government dysfunction. Systemic social services dysfunction cannot be solved by a Tuesday board vote. Notional platitudes are both accurately explanatory and a collective cop-out. In contrast to the varied perspectives associated with most issues, I see my colleagues as purely collaborative partners in attempting to concretely address the hardships of mental health treatment. Local government is not internally conflicted, but rather a warped puzzle piece in a picture of structural deficiency. Solutions are most apt to emerge through collaboration, increased public awareness and our willingness to halt the visceral tendency to dwell on culpability.

On May 9 of last year, at a "Stepping Up" event hosted by our county in partnership with Mendocino County National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), a father shared his daughter's experience with modern day criminalization of the mentally ill. While waiting for a psychiatric hospital bed, she stayed in solitary confinement in our county jail for over four months, allowed out every other day for an hour between midnight and 2 AM. The elements of this story have been deemed accurate by our county mental health staff, professionals who do not oversee mental health treatment or confinement conditions in our antiquated jail. As I understand, this fact pattern was not an anomaly, but rather representational of the way our society treats (and further injures) those with mental health conditions. I want to assure you that these egregious shortcomings have been rectified, but regrettably, I cannot. Protecting public money is an important component of my role, but the opportunity for change through silence has lapsed. It's now time to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.

More questions than answers at present.

## Another Supervisor Discusses Behavioral Health

According to a letter to constituents published in the Mendocino Voice by 3rd District Supervisor John Haschak, he and Ted Williams have been appointed to an ad hoc Board of Supervisors committee to work on Measure B. He writes:

“Measure B is making progress such as the construction of a Crisis Residential Treatment facility, funding for mobile outreach teams consisting of a sheriff's deputy and a mental health worker, and the acquisition of a training facility. We want to make sure that there is a solid financial and strategic plan adopted. There is too much taxpayer money at stake to haphazardly commit to facilities and services without ensuring that the money is spent as effectively as possible. We don't want to spend money here and there and then realize we don't have enough for a key project. We are making sure the numbers are correct and the expenses and revenues are all accounted for.”



Keep up with the topics covered in the *Voter* by visiting our Mendocino County League on Facebook. The site is <http://www.facebook.com/LWVMendo1/>  
You don't even have to sign up in order to see what is posted there.



## Adventist Health Announces Community Board

In October Adventist Health Mendocino Coast announced the names of the thirteen members of its Community Board [see *October Voter*], which “will be tasked with making strategic decisions that align with the mission and values of the hospital, [and] ... will also establish policy, promote performance improvement and provide for organizational management and planning, ensuring the hospital’s financial health and efficient use of resources to serve the community.”

Members of the new committee include:

Dr. Zoe Berna, family medicine physician

Nancy Bennett, co-owner and operator of Cowlick’s Ice Cream and Subway Sandwiches

Dr. Benjamin “Buzz” Graham, a retired internist

Jessica Grinberg, prosthetics provider, and current member of MCHD and MUSD boards

Suzanne Hewitt, nurse practitioner and Mendocino College Nursing program instructor

Jim Hurst, longtime local businessman and community leader

Steve Lund, former FBUSD Superintendent, and former MCDH board president

Mary Kate McKenna, executive director for the Mendocino Coast Healthcare Foundation

Tabatha Miller, Fort Bragg City Manager

Dr. William Miller, current Medical Director and Chief of Medical Staff for the hospital

Dr. Robin Serrahn, Medical Director for the hospital’s Emergency Department

Thomas Wajnert, financial services pioneer, formerly of St. Helena

Rebecca Walker, current superintendent of Fort Bragg Unified School District



*An Elders Climate Vigil has been taking place on some Fridays between noon and 1 PM all through the pandemic. League member George Reinhardt writes, “We’re undaunted by the small size, and think of Greta T.” This image is from October 16*