

The Voter

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF MENDOCINO COUNTY

November 2023

Charlene McAllister, President

Jary Stavely and Dorine Real, Editors

November meeting ...

Mendocino County Finances

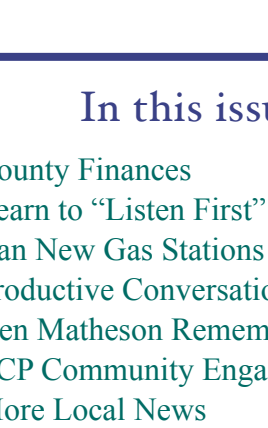
by Charlene McAllister

Mendocino County's finances have been making headlines lately in several ways. The State controller authorized an audit; the county Auditor is facing criminal charges and has been suspended; and there are concerns that County government is living beyond its means, with reserves only equal to less than a month worth of operating expenses.

During budget hearings in June, the Board of Supervisors directed the Executive Office to work with departments and community partners to identify functions of the County which community members and nonprofits could fulfill at a lower cost to the County. The fiscal year 23-24 budget approved the use of approximately seven million dollars (\$7,000,000) in one-time monies to cover expenses that will recur on an annual basis. Without cuts to the County budget, the structural deficit is projected to grow to more than ten million dollars (\$10,000,000) in fiscal year 24-25. Meanwhile employee contracts are also under negotiation, which could further increase County expenses. As such, the Board has undertaken a larger effort to reduce expenses related to nonessential operations.

What changes are under review? Fourth District Supervisor Dan Gjerde will discuss the county's current fiscal situation and possible next steps for the County at our November members' meeting on Tuesday, November 14 at 6:00. Non-members are always welcome, so invite your civic-minded friends.

Zoom from home



Tuesday
November 14
6:00 pm
CLICK HERE
to join

In this issue ...

- County Finances
- Learn to "Listen First"
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Calendar

- November
- American Indian Heritage Month*
- November 7 8:00 pm C.V. Starr Center
Fort Bragg special election closes
- November 14 (Tuesday) 6:00 pm Zoom
Members' meeting: Mendocino County Finances
- November 16 (Thursday) 4:00 pm Zoom
"Productive Conversations" webinar
- November 23 (Thursday) U.S.
Thanksgiving Day

The public is welcome at these LWVWC events. Please invite your friends and neighbors.

President's message ...

Learn to "Listen First"

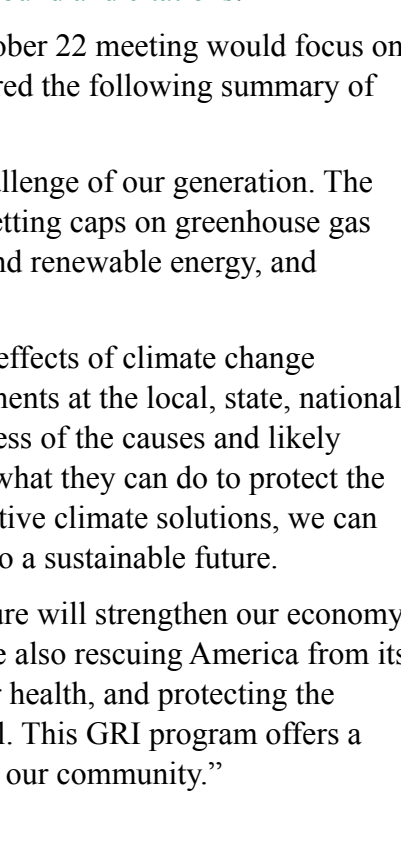
by Charlene McAllister

We are hearing over and over again how divided we are, and the recent challenge of selecting a house speaker has left us all wondering if we are ever going to be able to have a civil conversation with those with whom we disagree. For a start, we can ask ourselves "Is the relationship more important than how they voted?"

I attended a webinar presented by The News Literacy Project in partnership with LWVUS and the National Institute for Civil Discourse. This presentation reminded us of why people seek out information that confirms what they already believe (confirmation bias). The reasons are varied, and include that it connects them to a community of believers and gives them information that calms fears and anxieties. The speakers noted that misinformation relies on emotional manipulation. We see the headlines and we react immediately, instead we need to slow down and think critically.

Consider that the solution to disinformation must start with rebuilding trust. We rebuild that trust by listening, learning and sharing—not to change someone but to expand our own knowledge.

This webinar, titled *Productive Conversations Without Confrontation*, is available on YouTube and shareable; or join the second session on November 16 at 4:00.



Ban New Gas Stations

GRI's new campaign

The GrassRoots Institute's Climate Crisis Working Group has launched a campaign to ban the establishment of new gasoline/diesel filling stations in Mendocino County, starting with a letter to the Board of Supervisors urging such action. An article on the GRI website states:

"We make this recommendation after a comprehensive review of similar actions taken in the last 2 years by jurisdictions in Sonoma County and elsewhere. Enacting such an ordinance would be entirely consistent with Mendocino County's 2019 Declaration of a Climate Emergency when it called unequivocally for a "just transition away from fossil fuels," and a commitment "to addressing the climate implications of all policies and actions that come before the Board that have the potential to impact greenhouse gas emissions."

"Furthermore, this action could accelerate the transition to clean energy transportation by refocusing scarce County staff time and resources. In order to meet our climate goals, we need to pursue a rapid build-up of alternative approaches, such as pedestrian infrastructure, biking amenities, clean-emission public transit, zero-emission vehicles and the charging infrastructure to support them."

The article continues with several pages of background and citations.

In response to the GRI announcement that its October 22 meeting would focus on this campaign, President Charlene McAllister shared the following summary of the League's climate change positions:

"Climate change is the greatest environmental challenge of our generation. The League supports legislative solutions, including setting caps on greenhouse gas and carbon pollution, encouraging conservation and renewable energy, and investing in a new clean energy economy.

"The League believes that averting the damaging effects of climate change requires action from both individuals and governments at the local, state, national and international levels. By raising public awareness of the causes and likely impacts of climate change, helping citizens learn what they can do to protect the environment, and building broad support for effective climate solutions, we can help put our country (and our planet) on the path to a sustainable future.

"We believe that a path toward a clean energy future will strengthen our economy by opening up millions of jobs to Americans while also rescuing America from its dependence on fossil fuels, reducing threats to our health, and protecting the natural resources that we depend upon for survival. This GRI program offers a public discussion on the impacts of gas stations in our community."

2024 Ballot Preview

The information below is taken from the Mendocino County Elections website, the California Secretary of State website, and Ballotpedia (see links). Candidate filing is not yet closed, so the official candidate lists are not posted. Some offices may be uncontested.

County offices The county-wide offices that will be on the March ballot are three Supervisors (Districts 1,2, and 4) and two Superior Court Judges (Departments 4 and 6). Candidates must file by December 8, with five extra days if the incumbent fails to file. The November ballot will be available for runoffs.

State offices California governor and statewide administrative offices like Secretary of State, etc. are elected in "midterm" years. Half of State senators are elected in each even year, but since we are in an even-numbered Senate district we won't vote for a state senator until 2026. Members of the state Assembly are elected every even year, so we will vote if a challenger to Member Jim Wood files by December 8.

Congress Filing deadline for California's March 5, 2024 primary is December 8. This includes candidates for US Congress (two year term) and Senate (six year term). Because these offices are "voter nominated" rather than partisan, the top two vote getters, regardless of party, will advance to the November general election. So far, a whopping 40 candidates have filed for Senate. Our congressional district (District 2) has only three candidates so far, including incumbent Jared Huffman.

State measures There is one state measure scheduled for the March primary ballot. Proposition 1 encompasses The Behavioral Health Infrastructure Bond Act of 2023 and The Behavioral Health Services Act.

As for November ... State voter-initiated measures require petition signatures based on the number of votes in the last gubernatorial election. Initiatives and referendums require 5% (this year, 546,651), except constitutional amendments require 8% (this year, 874,641). These signatures must be verified by 131 days before the election (June 27, 2024 for the November 2024 election). Allowing for the steps of getting an approved official title, getting cleared to collect signatures, collecting them, and having them verified, the practical window for beginning the process is nearly closed. There are already seven initiatives approved for the November ballot and four constitutional amendments referred to voters by the legislature. In addition, there are more initiatives in the pipeline: 17 are in the signature gathering stage, 16 awaiting a formal title. (Only about 12% of proposals, on average, actually qualify, so statistically we can expect about four of these 33 initiatives to reach the ballot.) The legislature could also refer more measures, including ten bond measures.

By the way, some important dates for the March primary: Sample ballot booklets will start to be mailed January 25; vote by mail ballots will be available starting February 5; last day to register to vote will be February 19.

Initiative ... and Hard Work

Remember November 2016? There were 17 measures on the ballot. Twelve of them passed, including marijuana legalization.

Strategies to promote civil discourse:

Productive Conversations

Second webinar session coming November 16

The League teamed up with The News Literacy Project and the National Institute for Civil Discourse to host Productive Conversations Without Confrontation, a webinar offering "strategies for productive, civil conversations—especially when discussing misinformation," on October 24, and will offer another session on November 16 at 4 pm. "When a friend or loved one shares a viral hoax, fabricated photo or conspiracy theory, how do you respond? With the holiday season and a presidential election ahead of us, we can expect to encounter rumors and falsehoods along with heated debate. We can each have an opportunity within our networks of influence to build understanding and trust in our democracy. Experts from the News Literacy Project, the National Institute for Civil Discourse, and the League of Women Voters will talk about how and why misinformation manipulates emotions and exploits biases, provide strategies for civil conversation and resources to help you debunk falsehoods in a productive way and discuss opportunities to help your community find reliable election information." Voter readers can learn about the presenters and register for the webinar online.

The League is Non-Partisan ...

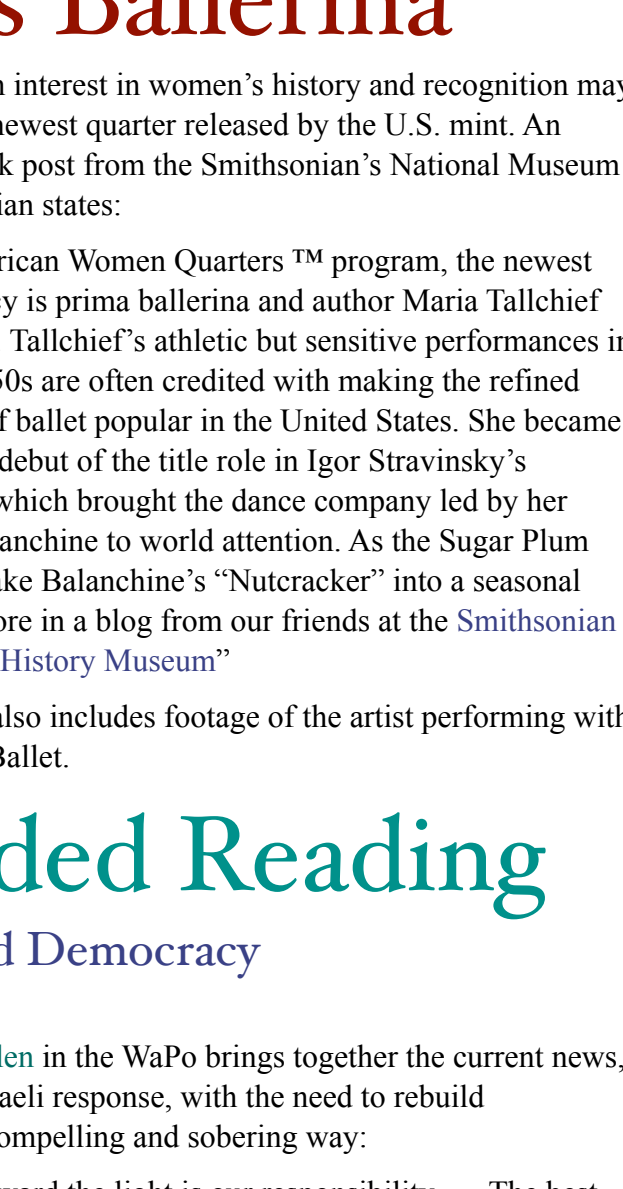
Several League members, including Dale Perkins, Sandy Peterson, and Cindy Plank, attended an October 25 Zoom presentation provided by the League's stance on being non-partisan. Here is a summary approved by President Charlene:

What does it mean that the League is non-partisan? There are two simple rules.

- #1 The League NEVER endorses candidates or political parties.
- #2 The League MAY take positions on political issues, BUT ONLY if the League has studied the issue AND crafted a position.

Ken Matheson Remembered

A memorial service was held on October 22 at the Mendocino Community Center for Ken Matheson, longtime administrator for the Mendocino Unified School District, and one of the first men to join the Mendocino County League. The League Board sent condolences to his wife, Barbara, a key leader and guide for our local membership from its earliest days. Here is a photo of Ken taken by Becky Bowen as he modeled a costume from the 70's during the League's 90th birthday party in 2010.



Local Coastal Program update ...

Fort Bragg's Community Engagement Plan

to be revised in response to GRI review

by Peter McNamee

In a message to Charlene McAllister, Peter McNamee of the GrassRoots Institute's Mendocino Vision Working Group has summarized recent developments regarding the Community Engagement Plan (CEP) for the City of Fort Bragg's LCP Update process [see October Voter article on the coastal Bay of Supervisors meetings], and the current status of the City's LCP effort:

The last few weeks the Mendocino County Vision Workgroup has been focused on responding to the City's LCP for the Harbor, and in particular, on developing written comments on the Draft Community Engagement Plan. The City issued the draft plan on September 12th with a due date of October 2nd to provide public comments. We were able to complete an analysis of the draft and submit it on time.

Sadly, that assessment found the City's engagement plan woefully inadequate. Here is a link to the Draft Community Engagement Plan for the Harbor LCP, and here is a link to GRI's Mendocino County Vision Workgroup's comments.

The Coastal Commission staff have met with the City and provided them with corrective guidance on the draft plan. My understanding is, the City is in the process of making changes to their plan and will issue a revised Community Engagement Plan shortly.

On other fronts, GRI's Mendocino County Vision Workgroup is recruiting volunteers and groups to develop public input on the LCP updates by collecting and compiling information about specific areas along Mendocino's coast. So far we've found volunteers for the following areas—Noyo Harbor, Little River & Van Damme Beach, Caspar/Jughandle, and the Fort Bragg Headlands. We're looking for volunteers or groups in the Westport and Gualala areas that might be interested.

I'm in the process of setting up briefings for individuals or groups interested in specific areas of the Mendocino coast that would like to be part of the public engagement activities associated with the LCP updates currently underway. If anyone wants to volunteer to help collect information about climate change impacts or land use associated with a particular beach, bluff or coastal area they should send me an email and I will help them get started, or hook them up with others in that area already working on that portion of the LCP update process. The League did a wonderful job this year holding an educational forum on the LCP process, and our local coastal volunteer effort hopes to build off that educational effort.

Lastly, the County is recruiting experts to undertake specialized studies focusing on coastal land use, traffic & transportation issues, water & development, etc. RFP's (Requests for Proposals) for LCP study consultants are posted on the County's procurement website. This is very exciting, because these studies will provide a wealth of new information about the impacts of climate change on the coast locally, as well as answer questions regarding resilience issues in response to climate change.

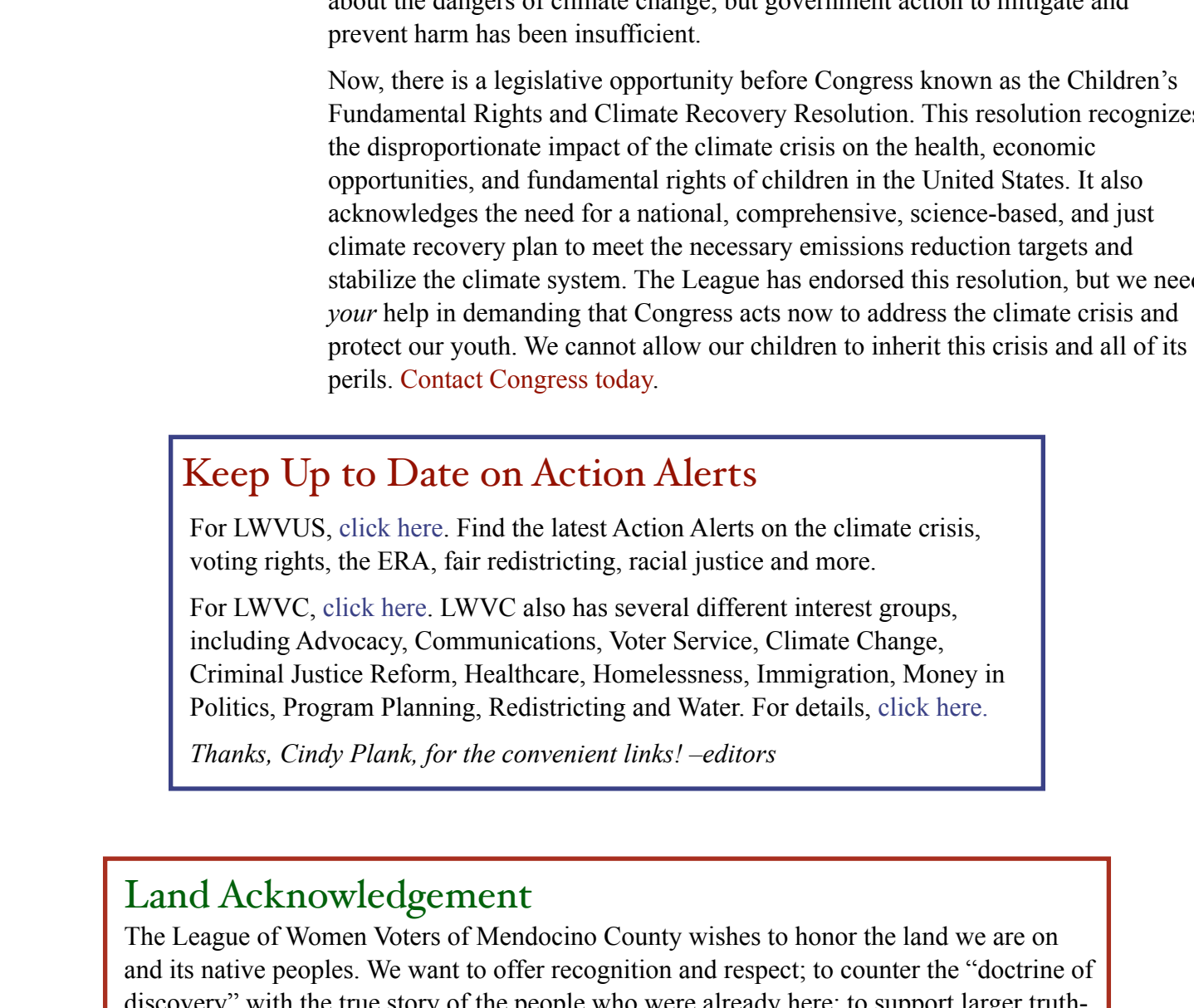
More Local News...

Reminder: Fort Bragg Election in Progress

Residents of Fort Bragg have been mailed in-ballots for the Consolidated District Election, the only one being held in Mendocino County this fall. Measure Q, the extension of a one half of one percent sales tax for the maintenance of city streets [see October Voter], is the only item to be decided. Voted mail-in ballots may be put into the drop box by the front door of the Fort Bragg City Hall from now until 8 pm on Election Day (November 7), or submitted by mail (no postage necessary, but postmarked by election day and received within the following week). There is another drop box at the County Administration Building, 501 Low Gap Rd. in Ukiah. The only polling place, open from 7 am til 8 pm on November 7, is at the CV Starr Center, 300 S. Lincoln St., Fort Bragg.

Indigenous Artists Share Their Work and More

On October 27-28 the Mendocino Art Center held a Native Arts Expo, "a celebration of the rich cultural heritage and artistic traditions of Indigenous communities." A variety of events and displays conveyed "the incredible creativity and talent of Native artists," where they shared "their stories, traditions, and perspectives with the wider community." Local artist Moring Nichols found the event inspiring, and shared this photo of a wall creation there.



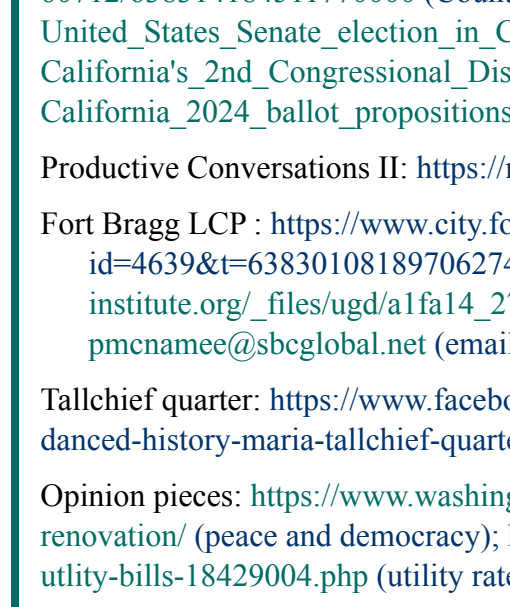
Local Food and Farming Movie Showing

A free showing of the regenerative agriculture movie, "Kiss the Ground," sponsored by Victory Gardens is planned, was scheduled for October 24. We got to Caspar Community Center a few minutes early to find about 20 chairs facing the screen and one of the hosts on tiptoe—on a chair—on a table, trying to find a way to plug in the projector. Every new arrival was asked to help, but nobody knew the tech. But no worries, our host said, "All we need to do is move these chairs around in a circle." Actually, we needed to add several more chairs. Then we went around the circle telling what we do and are interested in doing. The lively, supportive group included beginning gardeners, experienced farmers, and leaders in groups including Mendo Seed Mobile, Xa Kako Dile, Hubs and Routes, Garden Friendly Communities, and more. The group will meet again. (We may even see the movie.)

Correction: Healthcare District Board

The October Voter mistakenly reported that Paul Katzeff had resigned his position on the Mendocino Coast Healthcare District Board, leaving a vacancy. He did not resign, and there is currently no vacancy. In a message to the newsletter he states, "I rescinded my resignation when I discovered that my resignation could not be filled at the same time that Paul Garza was filling Jade Tippett's position." We sincerely regret the error. —editors

New Coin Honors Ballerina



Voter readers with an interest in women's history and recognition may be interested in the newest quarter released by the U.S. mint. An October 28 Facebook post from the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian states:

"As part of the American Women Quarters™ program, the newest face of U.S. Currency is prima ballerina and author Maria Tallchief (Osage, 1925-2013). Tallchief's athletic but sensitive performances in the late 1940s and '50s are often credited with making the refined European art form of ballet popular in the United States. She became a superstar with her debut of the title role in Igor Stravinsky's "Firebird" in 1949, which brought the dance company led by her husband George Balanchine to world attention. As the Sugar Plum Fairy, she helped make Balanchine's "Nutcracker" into a seasonal institution. Learn more in a blog from our friends at the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum"

The Facebook post also includes footage of the artist performing with the New York City Ballet.

Some Recommended Reading

To Build Peace, Build Democracy

recommended by Dorine Real

An opinion piece by Danielle Allen in the WaPo brings together the current news, specifically the Hamas attack/Israeli response, with the need to rebuild democracy, in what is for me a compelling and sobering way:

"Pulled into darkness, turning toward the light is our responsibility. ... The best goal of human striving is to live in the light and to help one's own society and other societies to live in the light. But always and forever there are forces that pull people and societies toward or downright down into the darkness.

"... To live in the light is to respect human dignity. To recognize and strive to protect basic rights. To empower people to make decisions in their own lives privately and together in public life through democratic forms of governance. To resolve conflict with nonviolent means. To establish the conditions in which safety and well-being for all in a society can emerge, where rule is for the benefit of the ruled, not the rulers. For a society to live in the light is for it to claim these orienting ideals and seek to adhere to them. The effort inevitably falls short. Living in the light also entails a perpetual, internal desire for self-correction.

"... I want to name and address our responsibility in the United States for helping to create the conditions in which this act of terrorism could occur. ... Our lack of civic strength here at home endangers the security of global commitments to human rights and victories already won against terrorism.

"... Democracy renovation requires reconnecting people to their civic experience, power and responsibility, and redesigning our institutions to make them accountable and responsive, so that when people flex their civic muscles through our institutions something happens on the other end. ... But it also requires repairing the relationships among us."

Utility Bill Legislation

submitted by Jary Stavely

An op-ed by regulatory attorney Alexis Wodtke, published in the San Francisco Chronicle on October 17, draws attention to new legislation which, it said, will unfairly increase the fixed fees which PG&E customers pay every month. As presented in the opinion piece, the newly signed legislation appears to be contrary to the League's position on state and local finances, and would be detrimental to efforts being made to respond to the climate crisis. The author begins, "Californians have some of the highest energy bills in the nation. For millions of us, those bills are about to skyrocket further. And I'm guessing you haven't even heard about it. I certainly hadn't until recently, and I'm a retired regulatory attorney with decades of experience practicing public utility law who used to track these things for a living. The California Public Utilities Commission, which regulates our state's investor-owned utilities — Pacific Gas and Electric Co., Southern California Edison, San Diego Gas and Electric Co.—has been quietly working on new electricity rates that would increase bills for most customers across the state. The commission is creating a new rate structure based on customers' income that will force most people to pay high fixed fees that don't take into account how much energy they use. And it is doing it all behind closed doors. The commission has denied requests to hold public hearings on the proposal. That's not how this is supposed to work — especially with how significant these changes will be for so many Californians."

The complete article includes a call to contact our legislators and governor.

U.S. League Urges Action on Climate

by Rebecca Goldman

Tell congress to protect our youth. The climate crisis is devastating our planet, harming our nation, and threatening our democracy. The window of opportunity to secure a livable and sustainable future for all is rapidly closing. Climate change has a disproportionate impact on vulnerable communities who have contributed the least to climate change-causing emissions, including the youth. Today's children are born into a climate system that is harming their health and well-being. We need bold action to protect their futures. Tell Congress it's time to stop putting politics before people and our planet.

Scientists believe that to prevent the worst impacts of climate change, we must limit the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial (1850-1900) levels. A recent UN report finds that under current greenhouse gas emissions rates and reduction targets, the earth will likely surpass this temperature rise by 2030. For decades, scientists and frontline communities have warned about the dangers of climate change, but government action to mitigate and prevent harm has been insufficient.

Now, there is a legislative opportunity before Congress known as the Children's Fundamental Rights and Climate Recovery Resolution. This resolution recognizes the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on the health, economic opportunities, and fundamental rights of children in the United States. It also acknowledges the need for a national, comprehensive, science-based, and just climate recovery plan to meet the necessary emissions reduction targets and stabilize the climate system. The League has endorsed this resolution, but we need your help in demanding that Congress acts now to address the climate crisis and protect our youth. We cannot allow our children to inherit this crisis and all of its perils. **Contact Congress today.**

Keep Up to Date on Action Alerts

For LWVUS, click here. Find the latest Action Alerts on the climate crisis, voting rights, the ERA, fair redistricting, racial justice and more.

For LWVC, click here. LWVC also has several different interest groups, including Advocacy, Communications, Voter Service, Climate Change, Criminal Justice Reform, Healthcare, Homelessness, Immigration, Money in Politics, Program Planning, Redistricting and Water. For details, click here.

Thanks, Cindy Plank, for the convenient links! —editors

Land Acknowledgement

The League of Women Voters of Mendocino County wishes to honor the land we are on and its native peoples. We want 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; and to remind ourselves that colonization is still happening. We acknowledge that the land where we live and work is unceded territory of indigenous peoples since time began. We are surrounded by the traditional, ancestral territory and current homeland of many indigenous nations.

Contact LWVWC

By mail: P.O. Box 1128, Fort Bragg CA 95437

By email: voter@mcn.org Message phone: (707) 937-4952

Our website: lwvmendo.org

Our Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/LWVMendo1

LWV 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

Links

Productive Conversations webinar: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HxcQODEqfk

Gas stations: https://www.grassroots-institute.org/files/ugd/a1fa14_0c7e160878214c81a53680b59424261b.pdf

2024 Ballot: https://www.mendocinocounty.org/home/showpublishedcontent/60712/638314184511770000 (County offices): https://ballotpedia.org/California_Senate_election_in_California,_2024 (U.S. Senate): https://ballotpedia.org/California's_2nd_Congressional_District_election,_2024_(House): https://ballotpedia.org/California_2024_ballot_propositions (propositions)

Productive Conversations II: https://newslit.org/updates/productive-conversations-without-confrontation/

Fort Bragg LCP: https://www.city.fortbragg.com/home/showdocument?id=4639&f=638301081897062748(draft community engagement plan): https://www.grassroots-institute.org/files/ugd/a1fa14_276e9cedad349483185e153285792e8c.pdf (GRI response); mcnamee@cbcgloba.net (email Peter McNamee)

Tallchief quote: https://www.facebook.com/SmithsonianNMAI; https://womenshistory.si.edu/stories/danced-history-maria-tallchief-quarter-release

Opinion pieces: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/10/15/hamas-terrorism-israel-democracy-renovation/(peace and democracy): https://www.schronicle.com/opinion/openforum/article/california-utility-bills-18429004.php

Action alert on climate: https://default.salsalabs.org/Tf02f46be-c2d1-4b3c-b66e-6d6e861bf0c/34be5bf-59e8-45df-bf3a-672b9216f0c7

Keep up with alerts: https://www.lwv.org/take-action (LWVUS); https://lwvc.org/take-action/action-alerts (LWVC); https://my.lwv.org/california/join-online-interest-group (interest groups)