



# The Voter



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Serving the cities of Brea, Buena Park, Cypress, Fullerton, La Habra, La Palma, Placentia, Yorba Linda

## President's Message by Kristina Fruneaux

Can you believe that we have already blown through the first 1/12 of 2024? I don't know about you, but to me, it feels like June is already practically on our heels! In all seriousness, though, 'tis the season for the Primary election. Our very own Jodi Balma gave an outstanding presentation of "What's on Your Ballot," which was highly informative, AND dare I say, also interesting. I left the meeting with plenty to think about. If you think Primary season snuck up on is (I do!), then we know time is of the essence for planning for our 2024 General election season. There are SO many details to work out, and so much to do; it is not an exaggeration to say every day counts. As a non-partisan 501c non-profit organization, our League is working hard to find the right balance between doing what we do best (Candidate Forums) while trying to stay within current LWVC guidelines for the "empty chair rule." For more information on the definition of "empty chair," please see this link: [LWV State and Local guidelines for debates](#)

Our Democracy with a capital D depends on the vitality of the democratic processes, which include debates, forums, and "pros and cons." Candidate Forums are a necessary aspect of informing the public about who they are being asked to vote for, and what the candidates will do on behalf of their constituents if elected. Many candidates relish the opportunity to meet the voters and answer their questions in a Forum format. Some candidates would rather not. When some candidates choose not to participate, the public is deprived of the opportunity to hear from ALL of the candidates directly. All forums must be non-partisan, and all truly successful forums require the participation of all candidates running for each particular seat.

You may have heard that our League is trying to lead in coordinating with LWVC to rethink the definitions and instances of when the empty chair rule would apply, for the reasons stated above. It's an uphill, technical endeavor that I think is existentially important. Not everyone agrees with me, and yet, plenty of people agree with me. And some people agree with me but don't want to "rock the boat" for "a 'rule' that is not new." Sometimes change is uncomfortable. Sometimes change is hard. Sometimes change takes a very long time. *And sometimes, if change doesn't happen, the failure to change is detrimental to the thing we are trying to protect by not changing.*



Kristina Fruneaux,  
LWVNOC President

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## President's Message [Continued from previous page]

Participating in marches and protests, writing letters, and other such actions are important options for public discourse, but they are NOT a substitute for insisting that Candidates running for office respect Democracy enough to participate in Candidate Forums, and actually engage with the people they are campaigning to represent. Recently, someone wrote to me, “well, there are a lot of other ways to promote democracy (besides holding Candidate Forums).” Maybe. But I can’t think of a more effective way to promote democracy within the communities we live than to studiously pay attention to who the candidates are and what they will do if voted into office. There is no substitute for a successful Candidate Forum.

I am so proud of all the hard work our Voter Services Committee members have been doing so far, and I am really looking forward to having a busy, successful election YEAR! And, VOTE!



## Advocacy by Richard Larsen

### **Here is a list of Advocacy actions taken in January by the League.**

On the sixth of January, a bulletin was distributed to Advocacy leadership interested in LWVC Ballot Recommendations, including LWV opposition to Proposition 1. On the fifteenth, Martin Luther King Day, LWVUS sent out a request to urge our U.S. Representatives to support the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. On the nineteenth, a bulletin was distributed to Advocacy leadership interested in LWVUS’s petition to support the Disclosure Act and root out dark money, which in one area is attempting to change the narrative around reproductive care. On the twenty-sixth an LWVUS petition urging support for the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution to ensure gender equality under the law was distributed to Advocacy leadership.

### **Legislator Interviews. To date, these two State Senators were unresponsive to our efforts as noted below:**

Dave Min, Senate District 37: Request for interview letter sent 1/16/24 to Mr. Min. Email sent to his office 1/26/24 in follow-up to letter.

Phillip Chen, Assembly District 59: Request for interview letter sent 1/5/24 to Mr. Chen. Called local office for status 1/19/24. There was no answer, and the answer machine shut off before a message could be left. Also sent an email to his office in follow-up to 1/19/24 letter.

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# Important OC Department of Education School Board Election, March 5<sup>th</sup>

Marcy Fry, Retired teacher (40+years), Fullerton School District-25 yrs, CSUF Instructor (1980's)

## **Essential Information:**

- This is a “one and done” election. The results in March are final with no run offs. *The ballots will arrive in early February and OCDE School Board candidates will be near the bottom of the ballot.*
- This election is significant as it will decide the majority of the board, influencing key decisions in children’s education across Orange County.
- Positions are for election in Areas 1, 3, and 4, with two candidates in each contest. The incumbents, marked with an asterisk, face strong competition. *A map of the areas and candidate information appear later in the article.*

## **Responsibilities of the Orange County Department of Education School Board:**

The board makes impactful decisions regarding educational policy, budget allocations, and overall direction for schools in their jurisdiction. Students directly under the jurisdiction of the OC Board of Education include students in alternative education programs (Access), special education, and juvenile hall schools. The outcome of this election is particularly crucial, as the board’s majority can significantly influence the implementation of educational programs, approval of charter schools, and other key administrative decisions.

## **Historical Context and Recent Shifts:**

Prior to 2020 most people didn’t pay attention to the party affiliation of school trustees because few trustees used their positions to advance partisan goals. We’ve seen a big change as the agenda of many candidates and trustees have shifted to include a political agenda. National political debates have been brought into local school board meetings. Polarizing topics include mask mandates, virtual learning, race and gender in the curriculum, book banning, and the role of parents in school governance. School board composition can lead to significant shifts in educational policies, affecting curriculum choices, school operations, and overall educational philosophy.

School board elections can have big consequences and cause chaos and dysfunction to school districts. This is evidenced not just by the Orange County Department of Education but also local districts including Placentia Yorba Linda School District, Orange Unified School District, and Chino Hills Unified School District. For example, California State University, Fullerton pulled their student teachers from classrooms from Placentia Yorba Linda School District for banning critical race theory.

<https://www.latimes.com/socal/daily-pilot/news/newsletter/2022-10-21/timesoc-latest-news-in-orange-county-calif-oc-cal-state-fullerton-critical-race-theory-timesoc>

<https://voiceofoc.org/2023/01/did-orange-unified-school-officials-improperly-replace-their-superintendent/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bfr2zxErsPw>

See **OCDE** on the next page.

## How to Make an Informed Vote:

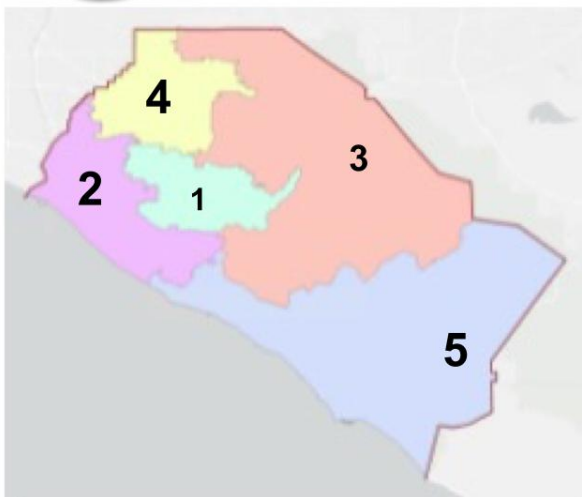
Choosing the right candidate requires more than just listening to their campaign speeches. Are their motives genuine or politically motivated? How do you know? Scrutinizing each candidate’s background, endorsements, and campaign financing gives a window into their priorities. Questions about their personal investment in public education, like where they sent their children to school, can offer insights into their motivations. Controversial terms like “Critical Race Theory,” generally not taught in K-12 schools, are often misused to mean a variety of race related topics. A Parent’s Voice may have originated during Covid and was a “code” for fighting mask mandates and vaccines. These terms are frequently used in political discourse but may not accurately represent the issues in K-12 education.

**2024 Board of Education Candidates and the Areas they Represent** *(from Jodi Balma)* There are three positions to be filled on March 5, Area’s 1, 3, and 4, with two candidates running in each area. The incumbent has an asterisk by their name. Resources are included.



Simple Plurality wins in March  
There is no runoff election

## 2024 Orange County Board of Education



**Trustee Area 1**  
Jorge Valdes\*  
Beatriz Mendoza

**Trustee, Area 3**  
Ken Williams\*  
Nancy Watkins

**Trustee, Area 4**  
Tim Shaw\*  
David Johnson



### Trustee Area 1 Candidates:

Jorge Valdes\* <https://ocbe.us/Pages/Trustee-First-District.aspx>

Beatriz Mendoza <https://www.beamendoza.com/>

**Area 1** includes Anaheim and Santa Ana

See **OCDE** on the next page.

## **Trustee Area 3 Candidates:**

Ken Williams\* <https://drken4ocbe.com> (Read the candidate's endorsements.)

<https://ocde.us/Board/Pages/Williams.aspx>

Dr. Nancy Watkins: [https://ballotpedia.org/Nancy\\_Watkins\\_\(California\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Nancy_Watkins_(California))

<https://nancywatkins4oc.com> (read the candidate's survey and endorsements)

**Area 3** includes NE neighborhoods in Fullerton, Brea, Placentia, Yorba Linda, Orange, Villa Park, Foothill Ranch, Irvine, Portola Hills, Anaheim, portions of Lake Forest and portions of Tustin.

## **Trustee Area 4 Candidates:**

Tim Shaw <https://shawforschools.com/> (Read the candidate's endorsements.)

<https://ocde.us/Board/Pages/Shaw.aspx>

David Johnson [https://ballotpedia.org/David\\_Johnson\\_\(California\\_school\\_board\\_member\)](https://ballotpedia.org/David_Johnson_(California_school_board_member))

(read the candidate's connection—survey) [Vote-david.com](http://Vote-david.com)

**Area 4** includes most of Fullerton, La Habra, Garden Grove, Stanton and Westminster

## **Researching and Understanding the Current Board:**

In each race the incumbent has a challenger. Researching and learning about the present board can help clarify their positions. The OC Board of Education's website (<https://ocbe.us/Pages/Home.aspx>) has videos of board meetings, transcripts, and agendas. Understanding their achievements, financial management, and practices (including their choice and management of charter schools) offers a window into further governance. Resources such as [Ballotpedia](#) (which shares a wealth of information) and [Vote411](#) can provide comprehensive information about the candidates.

## **Charter Schools and Educational Standards:**

The approval and management of charter schools are among the most consequential responsibilities of the Orange County Department of Education School Board. This election will play a critical role in determining the board's approach to charter schools, affecting the educational landscape of Orange County for many years to come. Orange County Board Members' philosophy and practices regarding charter schools should be carefully scrutinized.

There is much controversy over decisions made by the current board regarding charter schools. The concerns are over the rate of schools being approved and whether they follow federal and state guidelines and standards. Proponents of charter schools say they offer a choice for students and parents. There are many charter schools in Orange County, such as OCSA (Orange County School of the Arts), that are highly respected and follow the California State Standards and Curriculum.

The current board has been criticized for approving too many charter schools at an alarming rate. Four of these charters, the Classical Academies, raise heightened concern because they are affiliated with Hillsdale College (*which identifies itself as a Christian Independent College*). The critics ask the following: Are public funds being spent on charters that do not follow state and federal regulations, such as state mandated history, special education requirements, and the separation of church and state?

See **OCDE** on the next page.

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## OCDE [Continued from previous page]

Elizabeth Dorn Parker, Ed.D., who was a 30-year Trustee of the OC Board of Education (1982-2012), is a Governing Board Member of Coast Community College District, and Vice-Chair and Treasurer of Samueli Academy Charter School, clarifies these concerns in her Opinion Article:

[Dorn Parker: Are Children Becoming Pawns in a Larger Political Game Where Profits Rule the Day Over Education? \(voiceofoc.org\)](https://www.ocregister.com/2023/04/28/orange-county-classical-academy-eyes-traditional-school-campuses-for-its-expansion/)

<https://www.ocregister.com/2023/04/28/orange-county-classical-academy-eyes-traditional-school-campuses-for-its-expansion/>

**More Websites to explore the current OCDE Board:**

[What reforms do OC Board of Education candidates propose? – Orange County Register \(ocregister.com\)](https://www.ocregister.com/2023/04/28/orange-county-classical-academy-eyes-traditional-school-campuses-for-its-expansion/)

[Orange County Board of Education loses lawsuit against Superintendents Mijares, Thurmond – Orange County Register \(ocregister.com\)](https://www.ocregister.com/2023/04/28/orange-county-classical-academy-eyes-traditional-school-campuses-for-its-expansion/)

[OC Board of Education cuts superintendent's salary by nearly \\$48,000 – Orange County Register \(ocregister.com\)](https://www.ocregister.com/2023/04/28/orange-county-classical-academy-eyes-traditional-school-campuses-for-its-expansion/)

**This is a consequential election and will impact the future education of Orange County children. Please consider sharing this information with family and friends. Above all, don't let this election drop off your radar. Questions?** Feel free to contact Marcy Fry at: [fry.marcy@gmail.com](mailto:fry.marcy@gmail.com)

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## Read with League by Patricia Larsen [p.larsen@att.net](mailto:p.larsen@att.net) (562)253-5255

Our next book club meeting is **Tuesday, February 13th at 1:30**. The book that we chose at our last meeting was **Thirteen Days in September** by Lawrence Wright, which is an account of the 1978 Camp David Conference, in which Jimmy Carter persuaded Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat to sign the first peace treaty in the modern Middle East. It was published in 2014, 289 pages long.

If those of you who would like will please send in suggestions for a list of books that we can choose from before or at the next meeting, I will gather them together and send around an e-mail so we can choose books for our next several meetings.

To start off, here are some suggestions:

**Electrify, An Optimist's Playbook for our Clean Energy Future** by Saul Griffith. 269 pages, published 2021. This lays out a blueprint for fighting climate change and creating new jobs in the process by electrifying everything.

**Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the birth of the FBI** by David Grann. 416 pages, published in 2018. In the 1920s, oil was discovered on the Osage land in Oklahoma, and the Osage people prospered, but then began to be murdered, one by one. The FBI was created to take up the case as the death toll began rising.

**The Coddling of the American Mind** by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt. 269 pages, published 2018. The premise is an examination of "How good intentions and bad ideas are setting up a generation for failure." It is an examination of incidents and policies on college campuses that are affecting the society.

Please send in your suggestions, and we can choose some really interesting and informative things to read.

# Lunch with League

by Jodie Balma

**LWV** LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF NORTH ORANGE COUNTY

Our February Lunch Speaker is Letitia Clark. Ms Clark was elected to the Tustin City Council in 2016, is a third generation Orange County native, and proud alum of Tustin High School. She is a champion of youth in Tustin and helped to launch the city-wide Lemonade Day program and Girls in Government Summit hosted by the City of Tustin and in partnership with the Tustin Unified School District.

Clark is an award-winning Public Affairs professional with several years of experience in the public and non-profit sectors. She currently serves as the Chief Communications Officer for the South Orange County Community College District.

Clark is also a bestselling and award-winning author with her 2021 release of a children's book titled *Mommy is the Mayor* and a 2023 self-help book titled *Baby's Room to the Board Room: A guide for working moms on how to transition from bottle feeding to boss moves*.


Clark earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Xavier University of Louisiana, a Master of Arts degree in Public Policy from New England College and a Certificate in Non-Profit Management from the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. She is currently pursuing her doctorate degree in public administration at California Baptist University.

She lives in Tustin with her husband, Zach, and three children.

**WHO'S UP NEXT?**  
**BREAKING BARRIERS TO EMPOWER THE  
FUTURE OF WOMEN SERVING IN PUBLIC OFFICE**

**LETITIA CLARK**  
AUTHOR: *MOMMY IS THE MAYOR*  
TUSTIN CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

THURSDAY  
FEBRUARY 22  
11:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.  
COYOTE HILLS GOLF  
FULLERTON



## League of Women Voters of Orange Coast BUFFET

**What:** Lunch with League

**When:** Wednesday, February 21st, 11:45 am - 1:45pm Check-in starts at 11:15 am

**Where:** Back Bay Conference Center (above Irvine Lanes) 3415 Michelson Drive Irvine, 92612

### Saving Democracy: How YOU Can Fight Back!



#### Summary of Talk:

In his 2021 book "Laboratories of Autocracy," democracy activist David Pepper walked readers through the nationwide playbook to attack democracy at the state level.

In his recent book "Saving Democracy: A User's Manual for Every American," he shows every American what they can (and must) do to fight back. And his key message is: we are ALL on the front lines.

Come learn what YOU can do to engage voters and protect Democracy at this pivotal moment for our country.

**BUFFET LUNCH PLEASE RESERVE BY The evening of FEBRUARY 16th** You can choose from the following two entrees: (1) Boneless Chicken Breast with mushroom sauce (Potatoes au Gratin; Steamed Vegetables; Rolls; Mixed Green Salad; Drink; Dessert) (2) Cheese Enchilada (vegetarian) (Caesar Salad; Drink; Dessert) The cost of the meal is \$26; Pre-payment on-line with credit card (contact [lunchwithleague@lwvorangecoast.org](mailto:lunchwithleague@lwvorangecoast.org) if you require other accommodation). \*\*\*\*\* **RESERVATIONS REQUIRED - NO WALK-INS!** \*\*\*\*\* Please Reserve (including optional guests) and select your entree(s) at the following: <https://my.lwv.org/node/53063>



## LWVNOC Current Officers and Directors

### Officers

President	Kristina Fruneaux
Vice-President	Deborah Vagts
Secretary	Bey-Ling Sha
Treasurer	Karen Bender

Special Events	Jennifer Trafford
	Jan Urban
Nominating Comm.	Pearl Mann
	Marcy Fry
	Karen Bender

### Directors

Action/Advocacy	Richard Larsen
Lunch w/ League	Betty Hammond
	Jennifer Trafford
Co-Membership	Marcy Fry
	Barbara Dunsheath
Co-Voter Service	Linda Lockwood
	Jan Urban
Speaker Committee	Kristine Dennehy
	Jodi Balma
Marketing/Publicity	Maggie Lee
Voter Editor	Jim Hill
Web Host	Ed Smith
	Maggie Lee

### Off-Board Directors

Read with League	Patricia Larsen
Past President	Pearl Mann
League Phone	
League Mail Box	Karen Bender
Student Outreach	Jodi Balma
Facebook	Jodi Balma
	Kristina Fruneaux
	Betty Hammond

### Observer Corps

Director	Vacant
Fullerton	Eileen Moore



**MEMBER INFORMATION FOR 2022-2023**

First Name	Last Name
Email Address	
Street Address	
City	Zip
Phone Number	Cell Number

**MEMBERSHIP FEES AND DONATIONS**

- Individual Membership @ \$85
- Two in a household @ \$120
- Free Student Membership
- Donation to the LWVNOOC \$\_\_\_\_\_
- Renewal
- Renewal
- Renewal
- Donation to LWVC Education Fund \$\_\_\_\_\_
- New Member
- New Member
- New Member

**PAYMENT INFORMATION**

- Check enclosed (payable to LWVNOOC)
- Credit card

Name on Credit Card	
Billing Address	City, Zip
Credit Card Number	
Expiration Date	Security Code

Please circle areas of interest for you and/or add a special interest to you:

- |                         |                   |                |   |
|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------|---|
| Read with League        | Education         | Climate Change | Affordable Housing/<br>Homelessness     |
| Observers               | Action & Advocacy | Voter Services | Help with Technology/<br>Communications |
| Special Events Planning | Fund Raising      | Field Trips    |   |

Do you have any skills or background that would support any of these areas?

Yes                      No

**Please send this completed form to:**  
 League of Women Voters of North Orange County (LWVNOOC)  
 PO Box 3073, Fullerton, CA 92834

