



President's Message by Gerri McNenny

Unite and Rise 8.5: A Campaign to Defend Democracy. By Lilly McGee, LWV Digital Communications Senior Manager

Updated 5/13/25

On April 17, LWV CEO Celina Stewart and President Dianna Wynn released the following statement:

"It has now been 87 days since the start of the Trump administration. From the flagrant disregard for congressional authority and governmental checks and balances to defying Supreme Court orders to bring Kilmar Abrego Garcia back home, one thing is abundantly clear: **our country is in a constitutional crisis.**

"We the people must fight back. That is why the League of Women Voters is launching a powerful new initiative, **Unite and Rise 8.5.**"

Through Unite and Rise 8.5, we will engage and mobilize 8.5 million voters to protect and preserve our democracy. Read on to learn more about the campaign and how to get involved.

Are We Really in a Constitutional Crisis?

The League defines a Constitutional Crisis as:

When the executive, the legislative, or judiciary branches cannot or will not adequately protect the US Constitution, when there are explicit attempts to dismantle a functional democracy within any of the three branches, or when any level of federal government takes action to destroy democratic institutions in a manner that intentionally or purposefully jeopardizes the US Constitution.

When these events occur, the constitution is deemed at the highest serious risk and warrants full-scale action to preserve and protect democratic institutions and civil society."

Since the Trump administration took office in January 2025, we've seen [increased attacks](#) on our democratic systems and a failure by Congress to intervene. This came to a head in early April, when the president [defied a Supreme Court order](#) to return the wrongfully deported Marylander, Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia.

On April 16, 2025, a US District Court Judge, James Boasberg, [ruled](#) that there is "probable cause" to find the Trump Administration in criminal contempt of court for violating his order to immediately pause deportations under the [Alien Enemies Act](#).

The executive branch's blatant disregard for an order by the judicial branch constitutes an attack on our democratic system. Therefore, we consider our country to be in a Constitutional Crisis.

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What is Unite and Rise 8.5?

Unite & Rise 8.5 aims to build a movement of 8.5 million individuals to unite and rise up against the anti-democratic actions of this administration. Launching in May 2025 and running until the 2026 midterm elections, this initiative is part of our [Women Defend Democracy](#) campaign.

Why 8.5?

The number 8.5 million is the estimated number of voters it would take to bring about change through nonviolent protest. This is based on the [following finding](#) from the Carr-Ryan Center for Human Rights:

“Nonviolent protests are twice as likely to succeed as armed conflicts...and those engaging a threshold of 3.5% of the population have never failed to bring about change.”

According to the [University of Florida](#), approximately 245 million Americans were eligible to vote in the 2024 general election. According to the above research, if 3.5% of these eligible voters — 8,575,000 people — engage in nonviolent protests, we *will* bring about meaningful change.

How Can You Make Change?

Unite and Rise 8.5 will fight for our democracy on multiple fronts, from the courts to the streets. More actions will be outlined in the future, but as of today, here are a few you can take:

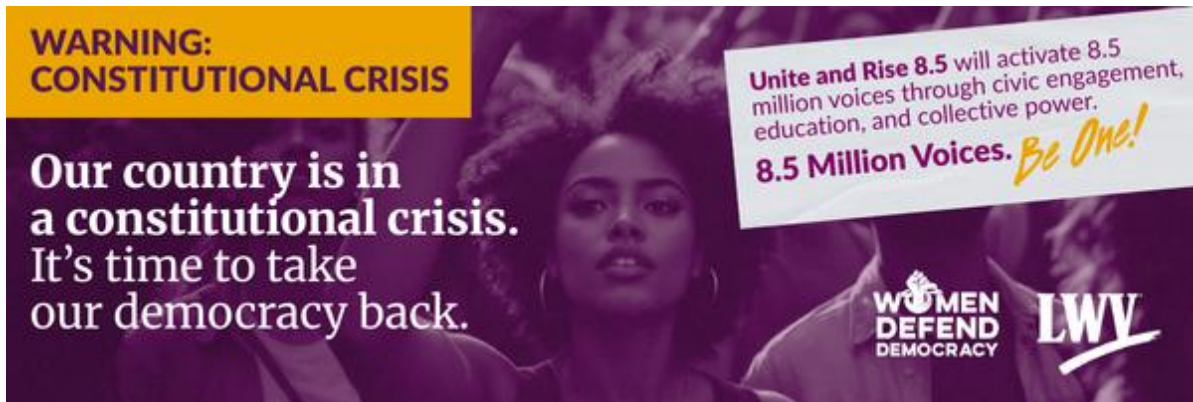
- Protect democracy: [Tell your Senators](#) to oppose the anti-voter SAVE Act;
- Tell Congress [not to gut crucial programs like Medicaid](#);
- Raise your voice about illegal deportations: join mobilizations around immigrant rights and due process with organizations like the [National Partnership for New Americans](#), [United We Dream](#), and others;
- “Turn Up the Heat” on elected officials: [Connect directly with your representatives](#) on the issues that matter via Town Halls and other opportunities
- Act locally: Join local organizations like [your state or local League](#) to act on the issues that matter in your community.

Please save the date of **Saturday, Sept. 27th**, for the
League of Women Voters of North Orange County's
Annual Kickoff and Silent Auction.

We'll be meeting once again at Coyote Hills Golf Club,
with the Silent Auction beginning at 10:30 am.
Please think about the fantastic gift baskets you can create
for our annual Silent Auction Fundraiser.

We'll be in touch with more information soon!

Your LWVNOC 



The League Fights Back! by Sharon O'Hara

“For the first time in its 105 year-old history, the League of Women Voters has declared that democracy is in a constitutional crisis. “The foundational principles that have sustained our democracy — checks and balances, the rule of law, free and fair elections — are under direct and sustained threat. This is a sad and alarming time for our nation, but I am proud to be part of an organization that is willing to speak up and fight for our democracy. “ ~Diane Wynn, President of the League of Women Voters of the US

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The number 8.5 million is the estimated number of voters it would take to bring about change through nonviolent protest. This is based on analysis from the Carr-Ryan Center for Human Rights:

“Nonviolent protests are twice as likely to succeed as armed conflicts...and those engaging a threshold of 3.5% of the population have never failed to bring about change.”

There were approximately 245 million Americans were eligible to vote in the 2024 general election. So if 3.5% of these eligible voters — **8,575,000 people** — engage in nonviolent protests, we *will* bring about meaningful change.

How Can You Make Change?

Unite and Rise 8.5 will utilize a multi-pronged approach — civic education and engagement, public mobilization, partnership-building, and legal advocacy — to help educate, engage and mobilize voters and drive change.

- There will be numerous opportunities to participate in the initiative — from participating in local education initiatives to calling your congressperson to protesting.
- Unite and Rise 8.5 will fight for our democracy on multiple fronts, from the courts to the streets. More actions will be outlined in the future, but as of today, here's an important action you can take:
- Tell Congress **not to gut crucial programs like Medicaid** where as many as 12 million will lose benefits and now the House version has cuts to Medicare as well.

This administration's flagrant abuses of power affect *all Americans*, and we welcome all those who want to see constitutional rights and democratic norms respected. Please go to LWV Unite and Rise and read more of our League's plans- **<https://www.lwv.org/uniteandrise>**. Our democracy is in peril and we cannot proceed with business as usual!

THE U.S. VOTING PROBLEM

by Richard Larsen

Compared to other developed nations, the percentage of voter turnout in the U.S. is in the lower half. This issue is not new but has been true for over half a century. In some cases decreased turnout may be due to local political restrictions. It's also clear that personal attitudes/beliefs affect whether a voter chooses to exercise his/her right to vote. The BLOG* below illustrates the severity of the problem.

[Click Here.](#)

Although Donald Trump only beat Kamala Harris by a razor thin 1.6% margin in the popular vote, the 2024 election was in many ways a blow-out if you consider all the ballots that could have been cast but weren't. Using data from the University of Florida Election Lab, a [new analysis by the Environmental Voter Project](#) shows that 85.9 million eligible voters skipped the 2024 general election, far surpassing the 76.8 million ballots cast for Donald Trump or the 74.3 million for Kamala Harris. If "Did Not Vote" had been a presidential candidate, they would have beaten Donald Trump by 9.1 million votes, and they would have won 21 states, earning 265 electoral college votes to Trump's 175 and Harris's 98.

As in most US elections, the real swing voters in 2024 were those deciding between voting or not voting...and they overwhelmingly chose to stay home on Election Day. While these numbers are terrible, the eligible voter turnout for non-presidential elections is almost half as many. Eligible voters are those who are registered and those of voting age who could register. "Did Not Vote" is the group of eligible voters who did not vote. Of the 21 States "Did Not Vote" won, one was California, where "Did Not Vote" got 9,758,952 while Harris got 9,184,242, and Trump got 5,989,358. When you get this kind of result in California, where it is very easy to register and to vote with almost no political obstructions, there must be a very large number of personal reasons to not vote. One an example is a well-educated engineer I talked to some years back who told me he did not vote because "my one vote wouldn't count." I found myself asking two questions:

1. Who are these non-voters? Are they young, old, educated, less educated?
2. What can we do to motivate more non-voters to go to the polls?

Think about how election results might change if more people got out and voted. We might even be able to keep our Democracy and Constitution.

Charter City versus General Law City Governance

As a LWNOC Observer Corps member at the Fullerton City Council meetings, I was intrigued when Mayor Fred Jung agendized a discussion of Charter Cities. I don't know much about them and I wondered how a city Charter might compare to the California General Law that governs Fullerton now. I'm not alone in lacking a full understanding of the potential benefits and drawbacks for a California city such as Fullerton to move from one form to the other. If others share my curiosity and want to do a bit of work to find some answers and perhaps a consensus to form a position regarding these issues, why not join the Charter City Study Group we are developing? Contact Ruth Zemke at rzemkeotr@gmail.com or 714 287-2290 to add your name to the group.

Big money in politics is drowning out voters - and Californians have had enough. An overwhelming majority say wealthy donors and special interests have *too much* power over our elected officials. And they're right. Mega-donors and corporate-funded independent expenditures are dominating our elections, sidelining everyday voters and eroding trust in government. That's why the League of Women Voters of California is sponsoring SB 42 (Umberg).



SB 42 is a bold step to take back our democracy. It lifts California's outdated ban on public financing of campaigns - but only if the Legislature passes it *and* voters approve it in 2026. SB 42 doesn't impose public financing - it gives voters the power to choose it.

- Public financing amplifies the voices of small donors and everyday voters.
- It lowers barriers to running for office, helping build a more diverse and representative democracy.
- It restores trust by reducing the stranglehold of wealthy special interests on our political system.

The League has fought for decades to curb big money's grip on politics and restore equity, transparency, and accountability. SB 42 is our next crucial step - and it needs your voice

We can't afford to wait. Help us return power to voters - where it belongs.

Sincerely,

Helen Hutchison, Interim Executive Director

Do Something!

by Marcy Fry, Membership Committee Co-chair

fry.marcy@gmail.com. 714-390-8633

It's been a hard reality for me to see our democracy unraveling. Like many, I've had my head in the sand and just couldn't watch, read, or DO anything regarding politics. Inspired by Kamala Harris' mom, and by Michele Obama, I keep hearing these words in my head, "Do SOMETHING!" So, I finally decided to get out of my self-induced snail shell and to help stand up to what's happening.

My thinking was that if everyone did nothing, we are sure to lose. If we do what we can, we might still lose. But there's a chance we won't. At least we will leave a legacy of trying to defend our democracy for future generations---and for our kids and grandkids. They will know that people, including their loved ones, stood up for them! It is said that the arc of justice takes time and it may not even return in our lifetime. But I'd rather live knowing that I did what I could. I think of the Suffragettes and Abolitionists who never lived to see their results, and am so grateful for their dedication.

Though I'm still very worried, I feel better taking action. I urge you all to do what you can to help save our democracy. Write letters and emails, make phone calls, attend protests, support candidates that value democracy, get more involved with the League, join groups that are like-minded and care about saving our democracy. There are so many ways to take actions.

Did you know we have a League of Women Take Action? Here's the link: <https://www.lwv.org/take-action>. You can also email Richard Larson and he will send you league action steps to take. His email is: rkajdane5@gmail.com I am so glad you are part of the league!

Advocacy by Richard Larsen

In the month of May there were six petitions and one notice for a webinar sent out to the Advocacy Group for action. The subject of the webinar was “California’s Immigration Protections: Resistance and Resilience,” scheduled on Wednesday, May 28. The speakers were

- 🌟 Pedro Rios – San Diego Director, American Friends Service Committee
- 🌟 Jason Bercovitch – District Director, Office of Congressman Scott Peters
- 🌟 Gustavo Solis – Investigative Border Reporter, KPBS.

The petition requests were;

- 5/12 A Medicaid support petition from the LWVUS.
- 5/13 A Common Cause California petition supporting AB868 on local elections in CA, also cosponsored by LWVC.
- 5/19 From LWVC a petition to rescind prior California calls for an Article V Constitution Convention.
- 5/21 A Common Cause California petition asking for control on AI use on Social Media.
- 5/25 A Common Cause petition on healthcare, People’s Promise.
- 5/26 From ACLU to Congress to stop immigrant human rights abuses.

Welcome to our Newest Members!

Kenia Flores, Anaheim
Linda Gardner, Fullerton
Patricia Haley, Fullerton
Susan Harless, Fullerton
Janice Hoidge, Cypress
Wendy Holmes, Orange

Ginger Ivey, La Habra
Janelle Lane, Fullerton
Marguerite (Gret) Milligan, Anaheim
Danita Sars, Anaheim
Sarah Shiao, Yorba Linda
Rebecca Tankersley, Anaheim

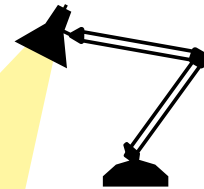
Everybody, please share about our league and encourage others to join. We always welcome new members. Here's the link to join our League of Women Voters North Orange County: When you get to our website, select “Join” for more information. [JOIN](#)

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us.
Co-Membership: Marcy and Maggie

Marcy Fry: 714-390-8633; fry.marcy@gmail.com
Maggie Lee: leemh123@gmail.com; 714-873-5136

Observer Reports

by Ruth Zemke, Sherlan Neblett, Denise Steedman, and Karen Bender



At the May 6th **Fullerton City Council** meeting, council members voted 3-2 not to rescind the resolution to block distribution of two local newspapers, The Fullerton Observer and the California State University Fullerton Titan in city facilities. Almost all public remarks were in favor of rescinding.

May 13 was a Special City Council meeting for Budget Study and Charter City discussion. It was suggested that more than one planned community budget session is needed for understanding the sales tax increases that will be presented in the next election. Controversial discussion continued about the charter city idea, supported by 3 of the 5 council members. The League is planning a study group to better understand and actively participate in the discussions about California General Law vs. Charter City systems.

At the May 6th **Placentia-Yorba Linda United School District** (PYLUSD) voted 3-2 against a Resolution “Supporting Title IX and Fairness in Girls’ Interscholastic Sports,” by Leandra Blades. The resolution blocked transgender athletes from sports. This school district currently has no transgender athletes.

PYLUSD, district schools, and parents are processing a charter school application for the Magnolia Science Academy, approved without notice by the County Board of Education, which demands use of public-school facilities in the district. The Academy will begin at Esperanza High School, with 120 Pre-Kindergarten through second grade students. The agreement with Esperanza is good for one year with option to renew for one additional year.

PYLUSD presented “Advancing Better Choices,” an anti-bullying campaign.

On May 20, the **Orange County Board of Supervisors** adopted a resolution opposing South Coast Air Quality Management proposed rules that 1) space and water heating appliances in new residential buildings must be zero-NOx emission and 2) replacement of these appliances at the end of their useful life must be zero-NOx emission. The Board suggested that these rules place an unfair burden on low-income families.

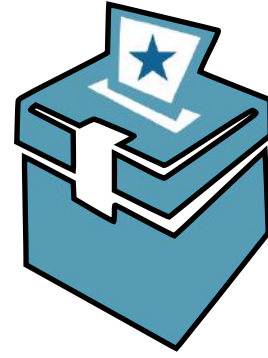
June 10 and 11 are the Orange County Budget hearings.

The **OC Board of Education** has developed an Ethnic Studies Curriculum(class) for all ACCESS (Alternative Education Schools) students for initial pilot implementation this coming fall. The initial draft was available for public review. At the April 2 meeting, dissemination of the curriculum to local ethnic organizations and standard media outlets was discussed; the only clear conclusion was that it would be shared with ACCESS staff and families.

For the Observer Corps complete reports, see our website. To learn more about becoming an Observer, contact Karen Bender at karen.bender063@gmail.com

Voter Services

by Sue Guilford sguil4d@gmail.com
or text/call 714-585-0984



Voter Services is what we do: serve the public by providing information about candidates, ballot initiatives, how and where to vote as well as WHY to vote.

Here's how you can be an active participant in preserving our democracy

Candidate forums

- Moderator
- Question sorter
- Timekeeper
- Greeters

Pros & Cons Forums

- Explain state ballot measures on November ballot (rarely on Primary ballot)

Support functions

- Put up yard signs
- Create compelling posters & flyers for events
- Encourage attendance at city or school district candidate forums
- Miscellaneous: contact candidates & sponsors, assist at forums, publicity, more

vote411.org

- This is a national service where candidates can post their information for free and voters can find information about what and who is on their ballot.
- Volunteers will invite and help candidates to participate.
- Training is provided, you work at your own pace on your own schedule at your own computer.
- Most work begins 2 months before the election and continues to one week prior to the election.

Dates to remember:

Primary Election June 2, 2026

No city or school board races on this ballot.

Possibility of candidate forums for county, Assembly/State Senate or Congressional District races.

General Election November 3, 2026

City and school board races on the ballot, also state ballot measures.

Training about August 2026

Candidate forums September and October 2026

OC Registrar of Voters Responds to the SAVE Act

Today [April 10, 2025], the California Secretary of State released the following Press Release regarding the SAVE Act (H.R. 22)

[California Secretary of State Shirley N. Weber, Ph.D., Voices Concerns about Proposed Federal Legislation that would Exclude Eligible Voters from their Constitutional Right to Vote](#)

Additionally, the Orange County Registrar of Voters has provided the following statement:

“From purely an election administrative point of view, if the SAVE Act becomes law of the United States, the cost of assisting voters who would be required to provide documentary proof of citizenship in person every time they register or update their voter registration could exceed \$6 million annually for the County of Orange Registrar of Voters.

This initial cost analysis is based on the number of Orange County voter-initiated new registration and registration update transactions that were completed online or by mail in 2024.

In 2024, we received 633,568 voter-initiated online and mail registration transactions. There were 250 County workdays in 2024. So, that would mean, we would have had to serve an average of 2,534.272 voters each day in our office.

Assuming each voter could have been served in 10 minutes (to scan a copy of the voter's documentary proof of citizenship, to verify the proof, and to update the voter's record), we would have needed 59 additional staff members in our office (57 to process and 2 to supervise) just focused on serving these voters providing proof of citizenship at a labor cost of more than \$4.7 million.

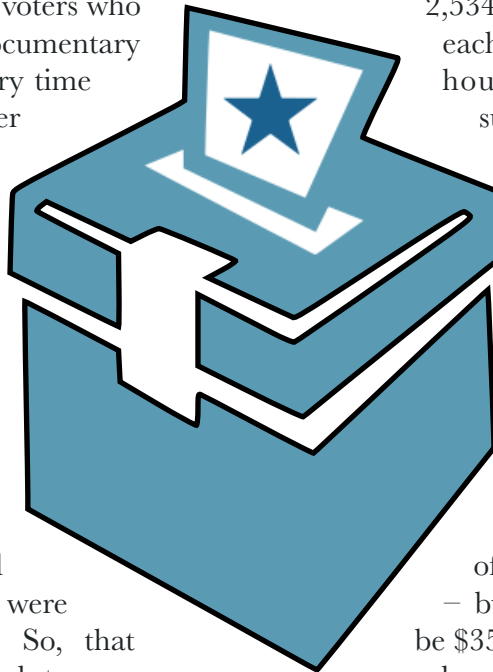
The math: If 10 minutes to serve one voter during a 9-hour day (8a-5p) with each employee working 7.5 hours (two 15-minute breaks and a one-hour lunch during the nine-hour day), then...

$2,534.272 \text{ per day} \div 7.5 \text{ hours worked by each employee} \div 6 \text{ voters served per hour} = 56.317 \text{ employees plus } 2 \text{ supervisors.}$

In addition to this initial labor cost estimate, we would expect to have cost impacts associated with:

- leasing workspace for each new employee would be \$93,000 per month or \$1,116,000 annually (County space standard – 175 square foot per employee at \$3 per square foot monthly for OC office space)
- buying cubicles and furniture would be \$354,000 as a one-time cost (\$6,000 per employee)
- buying computers, scanners, and telephone equipment
- hiring and training of additional customer service representatives to work in Vote Centers during elections to assist new voters who register conditionally to vote provisionally (same day registration and voting) who would be required to show documentary proof of citizenship to vote

Will Congress appropriate the funds local and state elections officials need to implement the SAVE Act?”



Special Business Meeting Update by Karen Bender

At our Special Business Meeting on May 22nd, our membership voted to change our IRS tax status from 501(c)(4) to 501(c)(3). The Board had already voted in April to make the tax status change. There were some changes that needed to be made in our Articles of Incorporation and our Bylaws to support our application for change of status to the IRS (per Tom Carson, our LWVC advisor). The Board approved these changes on 5/21, and the membership approved them on 5/22.

We also voted on two “housekeeping” items.

- 1) We voted to change the legal name of our local league to: League of Women Voters of North Orange County. (Bd 5/21; Members 5/22)

Our legal name has been League of Women Voters of North Orange County: Fullerton, La Habra, Brea, Placentia, Buena Park, Yorba Linda, Cypress, and La Palma. This lengthy name repeatedly caused us difficulty as we moved through online applications for just about anything. It was just too long to fit in the spaces allowed in the forms. We no longer list the cities we serve.

- 2) We voted to accept the changes in our Bylaws mandated by LWVUS concerning membership procedures. (Bd 2/20; Members 5/22)

LWVNOC Current Officers and Directors

Officers

President	Gerri McNenny
Vice-President	Sharon O'Hara
Secretary	Ruth Zemke
Treasurer	Karen Bender

Special Events

Gerri McNenny

Jenny Luzi

Nominating Comm.

Barbara Dunsheath

Betty Hammond

Karen Bender

Directors

Action/Advocacy	Richard Larsen
Lunch w/ League	Betty Hammond
	Jennifer Trafford
	Maggie Lee
Co-Membership	Marcy Fry
	Maggie Lee
Voter Services	Sue Guilford
Speaker Committee	
E-mail Blasts	Maggie Lee
Voter Editor	Jim Hill
Web Host	Ed Smith
	Maggie Lee

Off-Board Directors

Read with League

Love Adu

Student Outreach

Jodi Balma

Facebook

Jodi Balma

Observer Corps

Karen Bender

2025-2026 Focus Committee Heads

Federal Judiciary

Ruth Zemke

Climate Sustainability

Sharon O'Hara

Education

Marcy Fry