



The League of Women Voters of North Orange County

The Voter



January 2026

LWVNOC

P.O Box 3073

Fullerton, CA 92834

www.lwvnoc.org

Message from the President

by Gerri McNenny

Greetings to all of you in this new year full of opportunities for engagement with our communities and each other! We have a full agenda going forward and lots of interesting and exciting activities to look forward to.

Lunch with League. In January, our League is honored to host Dr. Frank Gomez, executive director of STEM-NET for the Office of the CSU Chancellor as well as Professor of Chemistry at California State University, Long Beach, at our January 22nd Lunch with League. He'll be speaking on "Surviving the Existential Threat to Higher Education and Democracy. Please RSVP by 1/18 to lunchwithleague@lwvnoc.org to reserve a place.

Read with League is back with some exciting reading choices! On Tuesday, January 13th, at 1:30 pm, League members will meet at The Untold Story Bookstore at 301 North Anaheim Blvd, Suite D, in Anaheim. We'll be focusing on two books on Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor from 1933 to 1945 under Franklin Delano Roosevelt. They are **The Woman Behind the New Deal**, a biography by Kristen Downey & **Becoming Madam Secretary**, an historical fictionalized account of Frances Perkins' life. The discussion leader will be Barb Dunsheath. Please RSVP to Charlene Brotman at cdbrotman@hotmail.com. The Untold Story Bookstore also hosts a food pantry, so if you'd like to donate non perishable food, bring some with you.

Our Voter Services, coordinated and led by Sue Guilford, Director of Voter Services, will be gearing up to meet the challenges of the upcoming June 2nd primary election and the Nov. 3rd midterm elections. Now's the time to get organized! You can contact her at sguil4d@gmail.com to let her know you're ready to pitch in.

Some of our most important work is done by the **Observer Corps**, whose members monitor city council meetings and other public meetings of elected officials, such as the Orange County Board of Supervisors. To learn how to participate in the Observer Corps, contact Karen Bender at Karen.bender063@gmail.com.

And let us not forget the **legislative interviews** and the many **Action and Advocacy** opportunities, both of which are directed by Richard Larsen. To find out more about how you can sign on to these, contact Richard at rkajdane5@gmail.com.

Unite & Rise 8.5, spearheaded by Sharon O'Hara, will be focusing on ways to reach out to potential new voters for the coming elections. She'll be updating us regularly on various opportunities for engaging more people in voting and in partnering with other organizations to increase our outreach. Please contact her at oharashar10@gmail.com if you would like to become involved.

As you can see, there's a lot going on with the League of Women Voters of North Orange County. And there's more to come. We hope you'll join us!

Inside this issue

Voter Privacy	2
Advocacy	3
Opinion: Healthcare	3
Observer Corps Report	4-5
Lunch with League	5
Officers and directors	6

League of Women Voters of Maine Successfully Intervenes in Justice Department Lawsuit in Defense of Voter Privacy

PORTLAND, ME — The United States District Court for the District of Maine granted a motion on Friday allowing the League of Women Voters of Maine (“LWVME” or “the League”) to intervene as a defendant in United States v. Bellows. The U.S. Department of Justice sued the State of Maine and its secretary of state, Shenna Bellows, in September for access to Maine’s statewide voter file. That file includes voters’ personal data, such as driver’s license numbers and the last four digits of voters’ Social Security numbers.

The League of Women Voters of Maine is proud to represent our members and Maine voters in this case of overreach by the federal government,” said Jill Ward, president of the League of Women Voters of Maine. “The League is committed to safeguarding the private data of our fellow Mainers, and we will continue defending Maine voters against intrusions that run counter to the highest democratic principles and values.”

By intervening in the case, the League seeks to protect the privacy of Maine voters and defend the longstanding state and federal safeguards governing voter data. It is represented by Campaign Legal Center, the Brennan Center for Justice, and Johnson & Webbert, LLP, a leading civil rights firm in Maine that specializes in cases standing up against abuses of power by the government.

“The League applauds the court’s decision to allow LWVME to intervene on behalf of League members and Maine voters,” said Caren E. Short, director of legal and research for the League of Women Voters. “Every voter deserves the guarantee that their sensitive information is protected from nefarious actors, and the League is proud to fight for the right to privacy for voters in Maine and beyond.”

In July, the Justice Department sent a request for Maine’s statewide voter registration list, along with questions regarding the state’s compliance with federal voter list maintenance laws. Secretary of State Bellows

responded to the questions but declined to provide the complete voter file, citing state and federal privacy protections. The Justice Department sent another request in August reiterating its demand for the data. Secretary Bellows refused. The Justice Department filed suit on September 16.

“These ongoing attempts by the federal government to retrieve sensitive voter data without justification are an attack on Americans’ privacy and freedoms,” said Sejal Jhaveri, senior legal counsel for litigation at Campaign Legal Center. “Our elections have numerous safeguards in place to make sure only US citizens participate, a responsibility that election officials across the country and here in Maine take seriously. The immediate impact of these DOJ lawsuits will be to deter people from registering to vote. Our democracy works best when every voter has a chance to participate in the electoral process, and we look forward to continuing the fight to protect Americans from the administration’s attempts to limit the freedom to vote.”

United States v. Bellows is one of 18 lawsuits the Justice Department has filed since September against states demanding their complete voter files.

“This state-by-state campaign by the Justice Department to collect voters’ personal information is part of the Trump administration’s broader effort to undermine American elections,” said Eileen O’Connor, a former attorney in the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department and a Brennan Center senior counsel. “Amassing data like driver’s license numbers and partial Social Security numbers from every registered voter in the country creates serious risks. It could be turned into a national database and exploited to fabricate false claims of voter fraud or to remove eligible voters from the rolls improperly. States have long protected voter privacy, and the Justice Department’s demands represent a dangerous federal overreach that threatens election security and public trust.”

In addition to Maine, the League of Women Voters, Campaign Legal Center, and the Brennan Center are working together against the Justice Department’s similar lawsuits seeking voter files from New York and Oregon. The League is also active in additional suits where the DOJ has sued California, Minnesota, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.

Advocacy

by Richard Larsen

The following were distributed to our NOC Advocacy list for action:

On December 3 we received a request from LWVC Advocacy an Alert urging Governor Newsom to use his executive authority now to grant **universal clemency** - changing every death sentence in California to life in prison without the possibility of parole, so that no one can be executed.

On December 6 we received a request from the National Campaign for Justice to tell Congress to conduct a full investigation into ICE's arrest practices, quota driven operations, courthouse detentions, and enforcement decisions that have led to unlawful arrests of citizens, non-criminal immigrants, and lawful visa and green card holders.

On December 8 we received an invitation from FACT to attend an OLLI Eclectics presentation ACLU: FIGHTING TO PROTECT OUR LIBERTIES on December 9 in Mackey Auditorium at OLLI, Cal State University Fullerton. We also received a notification from the County of Orange Office of Care Coordination about a meeting on December 11 to address homelessness at the County Administration South Building.

On December 9 we received a repeat of the December 3 ACTION ALERT.

LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEWS

In late November we received a request from LWVC to interview our local California Legislators and submit a report by February 23. After reviewing our membership count in the various Districts it was determined we should interview D34, D37, D59, and D68 Legislators. On December 11 a notice was sent out to all NOC members requesting from those interested in participating. Since then letters of request for a meeting has been sent out to all four District Legislators. If there are no responses an a subsequent request will be sent, and we will have a member from each District make contact through the Legislators website. Two of the Districts also include other local LWV leagues, and they have been contacted and agreed to let NOC do the interviews and keep them informed.

For-profit Care is the Core Issue

a letter to the editor by Sue Guilford, published in the L.A. Times

When will we start talking about the real reason that healthcare costs so much in the United States? Our healthcare is so expensive, about double per capita compared to other industrialized countries, because we rely on for-profit insurance to deliver health services. No other country relies so heavily on that model because the purpose of for-profit insurance is to make money for the insurance company and shareholders — things like life expectancy, preventable deaths and maternal and infant deaths — are regularly much worse here than peer nations. Until we stop hiding behind euphemisms and take steps to change, our healthcare costs will continue to escalate.

This country spends enough money on healthcare to provide services for all, but nobody wants to mess with the insurance industry, which has a lock on this significant profit center. And yes, I do understand that moving away from a system that provides so much wealth for so many without providing decent healthcare for the masses will upend our entire economy, but something has to change.

Observer Corps Report

by Sherlan Neblett, Deborah Vagts, Pamela Berg, Ruth Zemke, and Karen Bender

On **December 16th**, **Fullerton City Council** heard extensive public input critical of Mayor Jung and supportive of selecting Councilman Zahra as the next mayor. Despite this, the Council re-elected Fred Jung for a fourth term as the next Mayor of Fullerton; Councilman Dunlap is the Mayor Pro Tem. (The vote was 3-2, Jung, Dunlap, Valencia versus Zahra and Charles).

On **December 9th**, **the Anaheim City Council** unanimously approved agenda items relevant to the city's housing issue.

1) The Community Development Block Grant Sub-recipient Agreement with Orange County Fair Housing Council in the amount of \$135,000 to implement the Anaheim Fair Housing Program and offer Fair Housing Services for an initial 18-month period from January 1, 2026, to June 27, 2027, with 3 one-year optional renewals.

2) Community Care Response Team Homeless Services sub-recipient agreement with Kingdom Causes in the amount of \$6,850,000 to provide street outreach and homeless intervention services for a two-year term (1/1/26 – 12/31/27).

A number of attendees spoke on the police shooting of Alberto Arzola that occurred on December 6th. Ultimately some audience members began yelling and chanting. Because the Mayor was unable to restore order, the meeting was temporarily adjourned.

At the **December 2nd** meeting of **the OC Board of Supervisors**, an amendment to the contract with OC Health Authority added transitional rent for homeless persons or those at risk of homelessness. The amendment was not described in the agenda, nor was it available in the supplementary material.

Supervisor Wagner proposed advancing legislation that “aligns the standards for first-time voters in federal and non-federal elections to remove discrepancy in current requirements, which require voter identification for certain first-time voters in a federal election but not in a non-federal election.”

The **December 16th** meeting saw discussion about cancellation of some HUD funding. HUD has said that contracts will be renewed, but no idea when; this could result in 324 housed clients being in danger of losing their home. Some entity has already filed a lawsuit on this issue, and a judgment is scheduled soon. The County Commission on Housing requested a letter be sent to HUD. Though the Board voted to delay the decision to the next Board meeting, Foley, Sarmiento, and Chaffee declared they would send their own letters.

An agenda item to oppose the federal five-year plan expanding offshore drilling did not pass. (Wagner and Chaffee voted “No.” Nguyen abstained.)

Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District elected Board members to new positions on **December 16th**: Carrie Buck is the new President of the Board, Tricia Quintero is the New Vice President of the Board, and Marilyn Anderson is the new Board Clerk.

A report concerning student achievement shows that the district is out-performing state standards in language arts and mathematics. The report also shows that the district has a particularly large gap between the poorest performing groups (economically disadvantaged, English learners, and students with disabilities) and students not in those groups. The district is focusing on how to address this disparity. A 30-day curriculum review period began on 12/15 for the 2026-2027 school year.

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Observer Corps Report (Continued from previous page)

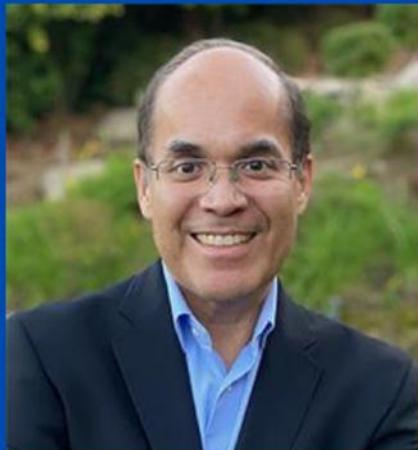
The 2025-2026 first interim financial report was presented. The district is looking at the following challenges: potential loss of federal funding, a California Dept. of Finance deficit in 2026-2027, decreasing enrollment, and rising health and welfare benefit premiums. In early June there will be public hearings regarding the district's Local Control Accountability Plan and Budget.

As this year draws to a close, I'd like to acknowledge the members of our Observer Corps (and Dee Steedman who has stepped away) for the many hours committed to attending government meetings, writing up their observations and sometimes championing calls to action. These acts take dedication, emotional intelligence, and analytical skill; the Corps is an important asset to the League. Karen Bender, Chair, Observer Corps

To access copies of our Observers' complete reports, go to our local League website, "Click on Observer Corps," "Click on LWVNOC Observer Reports," select the agency level (city, county, school district)



“Surviving the Existential Threat to Higher Education and Democracy”



Dr. Frank Gomez
Exec. Director,
STEM-NET,
Prof. of Chemistry,
CSULB & Office of
the Chancellor

LWVNOC's Lunch with League

Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026 at 11 AM
Coyote Hills Golf Club, 1440 E. Bastanchury, Fullerton
RSVP by 1/18 to LUNCHWITHLEAGUE@LWVNOC.ORG



LWVNOC Current Officers and Directors

Officers

President	Gerri McNenny
Vice-President	Sharon O'Hara
Secretary	Ruth Zemke
Treasurer	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
Speakers Committee	Joanne Fawley
	Gerri McNenny
E-mail Blasts	Maggie Lee
<i>Voter</i> Editor	Jim Hill

Web Host

Ed Smith
Maggie Lee
Gerri McNenny

Special Events

Barbara Dunsheath
Betty Hammond
Karen Bender

Nominating Comm.

Off-Board Directors

Read with League
Student Outreach
Facebook
Observer Corps

Jodi Balma
Ruth Zemke
Karen Bender

2025-2026 Focus Committee Heads

Federal Judiciary
Climate Sustainability
Education

Ruth Zemke
Sharon O'Hara
Marcy Fry