



# Santa Cruz VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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## In this Issue

<i>Celebration of Karen Smith</i> -----	1
<i>Pure Water Soquel Tour</i> -----	1
<i>President's Message</i> -----	2
<i>Offshore Oil Drilling</i> -----	3
<i>Education in SC County</i> -----	3
<i>CA Fair Elections Act</i> -----	4

## National Program Planning

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

1 - 2:30 p.m.

At the home of Sandy Warren  
150 Scenic Street  
Santa Cruz

## Local Program Planning

Tuesday, March 31, 2026

1 - 2:30 p.m.

At the home of Sandy Warren  
150 Scenic Street  
Santa Cruz

## We Celebrate Member Karen Smith (1942-1925)

Karen - a longtime League member - age 82 - passed away November 13, 2025. She served for several years on the League Program Committee and the Nominating Committee. Karen was efficient and reliable, but her refreshments for events were elaborate and generous-especially for League! She never wanted to be reimbursed for expenses. Family and friends comment that her giving and generous nature was legendary, and she will be greatly missed by many.

Karen and her husband moved to Capitola in the mid 70's where she became a teacher at the Mountain Elementary School in Soquel. Two co-teacher good friends that are also League members, noted her sense of humor, kindness and love of travel. Karen was also involved in many community singing groups, as she enjoyed all things musical.

-- Laura Grossman

## PURE WATER SOQUEL TOUR

Soquel Creek Water Department's new water purification facility

**Date:** Saturday, January 24, 2026

**Time:** 10 a.m.

**Location:** 2455 Chanticleer Avenue, Santa Cruz. (See parking and meet-up instructions below.)

**RSVP** by January 22 (details below). Space is limited, and at this point we only have a few spaces left so RSVP ASAP. Look for an email letting you know if your reservation is confirmed or if the tour has already filled up.

The League of Women Voters invites members and their guests to tour Soquel Creek Water District's new water purification project, Pure Water Soquel. Participants will learn about important mid-county water issues—including groundwater conditions, water reliability, water efficiency, and long-term sustainability efforts.

The District's main source of drinking water, the critically overdrafted Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin, is under threat from seawater intrusion and the impacts of climate change. Attendees will learn how the District monitors and manages this vital resource, as well as the innovative solutions being implemented through the Pure Water Soquel project.

Pure Water Soquel is designed to protect and replenish the groundwater basin by purifying treated wastewater through a proven multi-step advanced treatment process, then returning the purified water to the aquifer. This approach not only combats seawater intrusion but also provides a drought-resilient, sustainable water supply for generations to come.

The event will feature an overview presentation (this will be sent in advance as a video for participants to view on their own) followed by an on-site guided tour of the state-of-the-art purification facility.

**To attend the tour**, sign up by sending an email to [league@lwvsc.org](mailto:league@lwvsc.org) with the names of those who will be attending and a phone number where we can reach you. Expect a return email confirming your reservation within two days. (Responses and your video link will be sent to the sending email unless otherwise specified.) Space is limited on this tour, so look for your responding email to see if your reservation is confirmed.

**Meet-up information:** The tour will start at 10 a.m. on Saturday, January 24, 2026. Park at the Sheriff's building, located at 5200 Soquel Drive, and walk across Chanticleer. We will gather in front of the main gate to Pure Water Soquel located at 2455 Chanticleer Drive, Santa Cruz.

*If you have any questions or need more information, contact program co-chair Pam Newbury at 831-245-5758 or by email at [pknewbury@gmail.com](mailto:pknewbury@gmail.com).*

## President's Message

We are already moving in the direction



recommended in a recent League of Women Voters webinar on building coalitions, which is the third stage of the LWVUS Unite and Rise 8.5 initiative to preserve our democracy. At the

November 22 program featuring our Superintendent of Schools Faris Sabbah at the Aptos Library, our local League partnered with the American Association of University Women, which was the first group named in the webinar as a nonpartisan partner recommended by LWVUS. Other groups mentioned for

partnering were the Jewish Women's Group and the Christian Women's Group. Since our Santa Cruz County League has been co-sponsoring programs, including several on human trafficking, with the American Association of University Women and co-sponsoring programs with other nonpartisan groups for many years, the idea of building coalitions is not a new one to us. Building coalitions is an important part of being effective and reaching out in the community to provide voter information and encourage civil discourse, such a vital part of making democracy work.

As I look forward to 2026 and meeting more of our new members, as well as engaging in the work of our national, state, and local program initiatives, I am also looking back and remembering where we have been. We recently lost one of our dearest and most valuable members, Karen Smith, who had hoped to live longer despite medical challenges. Some of us learned of Karen's passing in early December, and memories of all she did to bring joy to our lives are coming back as I write this message. Karen, who was very conscientious in any job she did, brought a bounty of refreshments to two extremely well attended programs on human trafficking our League co-sponsored with AAUW. She also donated an outstanding array of refreshments at our October 14, 2023 program Creating Resilient Coastlines, featuring excellent talks by coastal scientists, Ross Clark and Bill Henry, held at the Capitola library. The January 27, 2024 program Conversation with Tricia Webber, Elections Clerk for Santa Cruz County, at the Felton Library was also enhanced by Karen Smith and refreshments provided by her team. At that time, Treasurer Geri McGillicuddy requested Karen turn in her expenses for reimbursement, which she did. Over the years, working closely with Stephanie Harlan, Karen contributed in a major way to other programs that provided voter service to the community, including one at the Scotts Valley library to an overflow crowd.

The Santa Cruz County League of Women Voters has played a major role as a community leader since its founding in 1965, with 2025 having been the time of our 60th anniversary. We look forward to continuing to provide excellent programs in the future and having the continued support of our members in doing this important work. If you haven't already renewed your membership, please do, and continue to support our efforts in whatever way you can.

---Barbara Lewis, President LWVSCC

## Offshore Oil Drilling – Again???

(Are we incapable of learning from our mistakes?)

**Just a little history:** At 10:45 a.m., January 28, 1969, 5.8 miles off the coast of Summerland in Santa Barbara County, workers on Union Oil's drilling Platform A created California's largest oil spill. With the OK of the federal government, the oil company was using inadequate protective casing, which ruptured from the pressure of the drilling, shooting mud and crude oil skyward. Capping the well drove the pressure underground, cracking the ocean floor. Oil poured from the fissures. Union Oil initially downplayed the severity of the problem, but on the morning of January 29 a Coast Guard helicopter carrying a state Fish and Game warden saw 75 square miles covered by oil — less than 24 hours after the blowout.

Over the next 11 days, more than 3.3 million gallons of oil gushed from drilling-induced cracks in the ocean floor. The resulting slick covered hundreds of square miles of Santa Barbara Channel waters. It caused waves thick with crude oil to thump silently on the shore and coated 35 miles of beach with sludge. An estimated 3,600 birds and numerous fish, seals and dolphins died. Union Oil and thousands of volunteers struggled to stop the leak and then clean up the mess.

*---thank you to Celebrate California for this description*

For more detail on the spill, you can review this article by Kenneth Clarke and Jeffrey Hemphill from their 2002 [The Santa Barbara Oil Spill, A Retrospective:](#)

**Comments due before January 23:** Dawn Addis recently convened a group of speakers from the Legislature, the Executive Branch of the California government and from several environmental organizations and the Monterey Bay Aquarium, to speak out against the Federal Government's latest plan to drill for oil off the coast of California. The speakers included, in addition to Dawn Addis, both Gail Pellerin and John Laird, as well as many representatives from both parties who represent the coastal areas of the state. They are asking for us to help them by submitting our letters opposing offshore drilling. Here is an [easy link](#) for you to get your comments to the Feds. **Please do this before January 23.**

## Education in Santa Cruz County

In November, we heard a presentation, supported by both the Santa Cruz County AAUW and our chapter of the League, from our Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Faris Sabbah. Here is his approach to education in the district, an approach he calls Building **BRIDGES:**

**Belonging** is important to all learners, and we work to ensure that all learners feel they belong and are welcome, respected, included and supported by others.

**Relationships**, when they are strong and trusting, are the foundation for learning, growth and achievements.

**Innovation** in education prepares learners by providing opportunities mindsets and skills that foster creativity, adaptability and resilience.

**Data** are used to measure academic achievement, but also to support a systemic "whole learner" approach to addressing resource disparities and ensuring quality and rigor in curricula, as well as engaging students and families in promoting equitable outcomes.

A **Growth** mindset is characterized by curiosity and love of learning, and also the understanding that mistakes and failure are valuable parts of the learning process.

**Excellence** is a shared commitment that leads us to exceed the expectations of our customers and to embody a culture of joy in our work.

**Sustainability** of our effective programs, policies and practices is achieved through collaboration and demonstrating impact.

*--Thanks to SC County Office of Education*

# The California Fair Elections Act of 2026

Partly because of the work of LWVC, this will be on the November 2026 ballot.

The California Fair Elections Act of 2026, proposed through Senate Bill 42, aims to allow public funding for election campaigns in California, enabling candidates to rely less on wealthy donors and special interests. This act will be subject to voter approval in the November 2026 election.

## Overview of the California Fair Elections Act of 2026

The California Fair Elections Act of 2026, also known as Senate Bill 42, aims to reform campaign financing in California. It seeks to allow public funding for election campaigns, making it easier for candidates to run without relying heavily on wealthy donors.

### Key Provisions

#### Public Funding of Campaigns

- **Public Funds Usage:** Candidates can accept public funds for their campaigns, provided these funds are not earmarked for education, transportation, or public safety.
- **Expenditure Limits:** Candidates must adhere to specific spending limits to qualify for public funding.
- **Eligibility Criteria:** Candidates must meet strict criteria, including receiving small contributions from a specified number of residents.

### Voter Approval

- **Ballot Measure:** The act will be presented to voters for approval in the statewide general election on November 3, 2026.
- **Repeal of Current Ban:** If approved, it will lift the current prohibition on public campaign financing, allowing all jurisdictions in California to establish their own public financing systems.

### Types of Public Financing Systems Allowed

**Matching Funds:** Small donations are matched with public funds (6 to 1 in some cities.)

**Democracy Vouchers:** Residents receive vouchers to support candidates who meet specific criteria.

**Conclusion:** The California Fair Elections Act of 2026 aims to create a more equitable political landscape by reducing the influence of money in politics. It encourages participation from everyday voters and aims to make elections fairer and more competitive.

**Another Bill That Safeguards Our Elections** has an author whose name we recognize. SB 851 was introduced late in the legislative session by Cervantes and Pellerin. Introduced late in the session, this bill protects voters, elections officials, and the integrity of California's elections amid rising misinformation, intimidation, and federal interference. The law bars unauthorized armed personnel - including federal agents - from polling places and elections offices, strengthens state oversight of federal lawsuits targeting local elections, closes loopholes on deceptive ballot collection, and affirms that certifying results is a ministerial duty, not a political choice. With its urgency clause, these protections took effect immediately— well before the next statewide election. The LWVC mobilized rapid support, making clear that Californians must be able to cast ballots free from fear and manipulation.

