



Santa Cruz VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

March 2019

Volume 53, Number 7

In this Issue

<i>Local Program Planning in March</i> -----	1
<i>President's Message</i> -----	2
<i>April Water Forum</i> -----	2
<i>May Recycling Tour</i> -----	3
<i>June Annual Meeting</i> -----	3
<i>Analyzing Income Inequality</i> -----	3
<i>Global Warming Tsunami</i> -----	7

Calendar

Thursday, March 7, 2019
1-3 p.m.
Local Program Planning
Home of Sandy Warren
150 Scenic Street, Santa Cruz, CA

Tuesday, March 12, 2019
10 a.m.-noon
LWVSCC Board Meeting
Santa Cruz County Bank
75 River Street, Santa Cruz, CA

Tuesday, April 9, 2019
10 a.m.-noon
LWVSCC Board Meeting
Santa Cruz County Bank
75 River Street, Santa Cruz, CA

Saturday, April 27, 2019
10:00 a.m.–Noon
Water Options Forum
Capitola City Hall, Council Chambers
420 Capitola Avenue, Capitola, CA 95010
Free and open to the public

Tuesday, May 14, 2019
10 a.m.-noon
LWVSCC Board Meeting
Santa Cruz County Bank
75 River Street, Santa Cruz, CA

Tuesday, May 21, 2019
12:30-2 p.m.
Recycling Tour
CSC Resource Recovery Facility
605 Dimeo Lane, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Free and open to the public
Reservations required
RSVP: league@lwvsc.org or (831)325-4140

Saturday, June 8, 2019
10:00 a.m.–Noon
LWVSCC Annual Meeting
Seascope Golf Club, Seascope room
610 Clubhouse Drive, Aptos, California 95003
Details to be announced

Local Program Planning

Featured speaker: YOU!

Program Title:
**Your Ideas for
Speakers and Topics**

Thursday
March 7, 2019
1-3 p.m.

Home of Sandy Warren
150 Scenic Street, Santa Cruz, CA

All League members and their guests are welcome



Bring your hot topics to our March local program planning meeting. This is your chance to shape our League's 2019-2020 programs. Tell us what local issues and concerns you want to learn more about and what speakers you want to hear from. Whether it's a single program or a year-long study that will result in a new or revised League position, we want to hear about it.

Our local League's positions on county government, education, health care, land use, library service, transportation, voters' rights, and water resources can be viewed on our website: lwvsc.org/positions. Look them over and let us know if you see something that needs updating or if there's a local topic that's not covered.

The League is a grass-roots organization; your ideas are what keeps the grass growing. Share your ideas at our local program planning meeting on Thursday, March 7, 1-3 p.m. at the home of Sandy Warren, 150 Scenic Street in Santa Cruz. Have an idea but can't make the meeting? Send them to us in an email in advance of the meeting at league@lwvsc.org.

Directions to meeting: From northbound Highway 1/Mission Street, turn right onto Bay Street (towards UCSC). Continue on Bay 0.7 of a mile, turn left onto Escalona Drive (past Kenneth Street), then make an immediate right onto Bayona Drive heading uphill. Take the first left onto Scenic Street; 150 is the last house on the left at the end of the cul-de-sac.

President's Message



As we look forward to our local program planning on March 7 (see details on page 1), I want to thank all who participated and sent their ideas last year, then followed through to make this an outstanding year of programs for the League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz

County. We have explored key components of Making Democracy Work, the focus of our LWWUS effort.

In September, award-winning reporter Robin Musitelli spoke about the resurgence of community journalism and how print media shapes our perceptions, which was a fascinating continuation of our look at media. At our 2018 local program planning meeting, Caroline Elam suggested this topic.

During the fall election season, our numerous programs on the pros and cons of the ballot measures and voter service efforts in the community were important for Making Democracy Work. Our members made these programs happen.

Thank you to Suse Shane for suggesting the talk on deepening economic inequality and its consequences throughout society by UCSC Professor of Psychology Heather Bullock, Ph.D., which took place on February 9 at the Resource Center for Nonviolence (see report on this program on page 3). Of course, kudos go to our excellent speaker, Heather Bullock, and to all who provided refreshments and braved the cold to attend and participate in this standing-room-only event. Confronting the rich-poor gap appears to be imperative to Making Democracy Work.

Our program chair, Stephanie Harlan, has played a major role in making arrangements for these highly successful events and doing community outreach to co-sponsoring groups. This year, Kathy Van Horn and Pam Newbury have worked on publicity, and leaders in the co-sponsoring groups have also helped. With joy, I want to thank Stephanie and Karen Smith for consistently providing refreshments, at both the

programs on human trafficking and those focused on Making Democracy Work.

We have been very fortunate to have Pam Newbury produce videos of these excellent programs for us to see. You'll find links to videos of past programs on our website at lwvscc.org/videos. You can also read reports the programs in past VOTER newsletters at lwvscc.org/voter.

We'll continue with a great lineup of spring programs starting in April with a program on water issues; in May we'll learn about recycling concerns; and at our June annual meeting we'll hear from Cabrillo College's president, Matthew Wetstein (for details, see below and page 3).

—Barbara Lewis, President LWVSCC

Water Options to be Discussed at April Meeting

Groundwater replenishment with purified water, river water transfers, desalination, and storm water capture are some of the options currently under consideration to address seawater intrusion into the critically overdrafted mid-county groundwater basin. Learn more about the Pure Water Soquel Project and other options to help protect the groundwater basin and ensure a sustainable water supply on Saturday, April 27, 10 a.m. to noon at the Capitola City Hall in the Council Chambers, 420 Capitola Avenue, in Capitola. The event is free and open to the public.

We'll hear from a panel that includes Melanie Mow Schumacher, Soquel Creek Water District special projects and communications manager; Heidi Luckenbach, City of Santa Cruz Deputy Director of Engineering; and Darcelle Pruitt, lead planner for groundwater sustainability for the Regional Water Management Foundation, a subsidiary of Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County.

Light refreshments served at 10, program begins at 10:30. Metered parking is available in city hall parking lot next door.

Recycling Questions Answered Here

Ever wonder what happens to all those plastic containers you toss into your recycling bin? Until this year, most of them have been shipped to China, but China has enacted restrictions that will prevent imports of most post-consumer plastic.

In May, you can join the League as we tour the Santa Cruz recycling facility to see what happens to our waste first-hand. Find out the fate of what goes into your recycling bin and learn how you can become a better recycler and consumer.

Make your reservation today for the tour on Tuesday, May 21 at 12:30 pm at the City of Santa Cruz Resource Recovery Facility, 605 Dimeo Lane. The tour is free and open to League members and the public, but space is limited and reservations are required; to sign up, email league@lwvsc.org or call (831)325-4140.

LWVSCC 2019 Annual Meeting

Featuring Cabrillo College president,
Matthew Wetstein

Save the date for the League's 2019 annual meeting on June 8. We'll vote on next year's board and programs and hear from our featured speaker, Cabrillo College president, Matthew Wetstein.

In February 2018, Matthew Wetstein took over the presidency of Cabrillo College when the former president, Laurel Jones, retired. Wetstein came from San Joaquin Delta College in Stockton, bringing new energy and a wide variety of professional experiences to Santa Cruz County. Come and hear President Wetstein's plans for what is new and exciting at Cabrillo College.

The League's annual meeting is open to members and the public and will be held on Saturday, June 8 from 10 to noon at the Seascapes Golf Club in the Seascapes Room, 610 Clubhouse Drive, Aptos. Reservation details will be announced soon.

A Bumpy Ride:

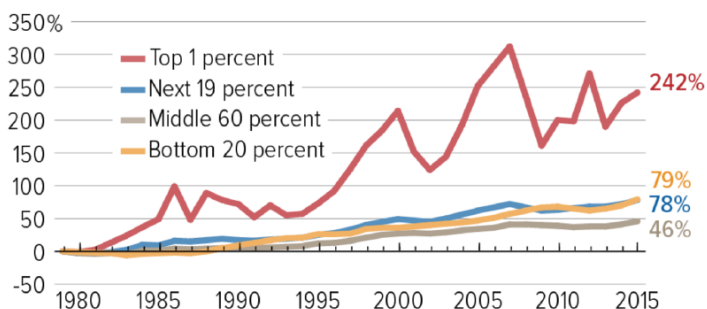
The journey to Pietopia: an analysis of income inequality

Social psychologist Heather Bullock, Ph.D., professor of psychology at UCSC and director of the Blum Center on Poverty, spoke to a full room at the League's February meeting on the rich-poor gap. She began with a reflection on juxtaposition of wealth and privilege against economic hardship that can be seen every day anywhere, including here in Santa Cruz, and how that led her to try to understand why we respond to economic hardships with certain attitudes, beliefs, and responses. She spoke about the beliefs that legitimize inequality, why we tolerate inequality in our society, and strategies for creating greater equality.

Bullock began by pointing out that the combined wealth of the eight richest men in the world is equal to the wealth of the bottom half of the global population, and that the richest 1% now owns more of the country's wealth than at any time in the past 50 years. The richest 1% bagged 82% of the wealth created last year, while the poorest half of humanity got nothing. Since 1980, incomes for the top 1% of U.S. households have seen tremendous gains of 242%, whereas incomes for middle- and lower-income households have stagnated. Bullock cited the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (cbpp.org) as an excellent source for statistics and charts to help see trends over time (see their [guide to statistics on historical trends in income inequality](#) for more information).

Income Gains at the Top Dwarf Those of Low- and Middle-Income Households

Percent change in income after transfers and taxes since 1979



Source: Congressional Budget Office

Gains and losses within some groups are not equally distributed, with some falling further and further behind: wages for whites without a college degree and for blacks and Latinos with a college degree have declined.



UCSC Professor Heather Bullock challenges the myth of meritocracy and the widening economic divide.

Income is very unequally distributed, but wealth is even more unequally distributed. The richest 1% now control as much wealth or more than the bottom 90%. To help visualize this, Bullock recommended thinking in terms of pie: in “Pietopia”, if you had 100 pieces of pie and 100 people, each person would have one piece of pie; in reality, Bullock said, “the pie is distributed so that top 20% has 90 slices of the pie, the second 20% has 8 slices of the pie, the middle 20% has just two slices of the pie, the fourth 20% has zero slices, they've got nothing not even the crumbs, and then the bottom 20% has negative slices of pie, they're actually minus one.”

The question people sometimes ask, said Bullock, is “Why does this matter? Why should we be concerned about this, isn't this the natural evolution of capitalism?” Of course, said Bullock, there's no doubt that low income people bear the burden of inequality, “but it's also true that a growing body of research shows that, in fact, everybody suffers due to inequality. It actually is bad for us at a societal level.”

Bullock recommended the book *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger* (by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett), which documents the many ways that we are affected at

the societal level by inequality by looking at life expectancy, math and literacy scores, infant mortality, homicides, imprisonment, adolescent births, trust, obesity, social mobility, and mental illness, including substance use. Countries with higher rates of economic inequality fare more poorly on all these indicators. Bullock recommended The Equality Trust website, equalitytrust.org.uk, which was created by the authors of *The Spirit Level*, where you can view some of the graphs she references. According to Bullock, they've done amazing work related to economic inequality and mapping out these indicators. Their thesis is essentially that inequality is toxic to our society, it is eroding us. It is hurting us in terms of health and well-being indicators, and it's also hurting us in terms of cohesiveness and trust. “We need to be thinking more about how we're being affected by economic inequality,” said Bullock, “I think sometimes it's just become so much the fabric of our lives that we don't step back and notice it.”

...our attitudes and beliefs play a role in whether we tolerate inequality or even see it as a problem or an issue

“There's a lot of ways,” said Bullock, “to think about how we got here and why we tolerate this level of inequality... There are clearly people who benefit from inequality. We cannot get away from that structural dimension of it, but it is also the case that our attitudes and beliefs play a role in whether we tolerate inequality or even see it as a problem or an issue.”

Bullock focused on three beliefs that play a role in legitimizing inequality: meritocracy, individualism, and belief in class mobility. Meritocracy is the belief that if you work hard and you're talented, you will rise to the top regardless of your family, origins, race, or other characteristics. Individualism is the emphasis on self-reliance, that “pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps idea of the rugged individual.” Belief in class mobility is the idea that we have a lot of opportunity for upward mobility on the socio-economic ladder.

Much more so than in other countries, individualism is central to the U.S. cultural landscape. Bullock referenced research by the Pew Research Center that reported that 73% of U.S. survey respondents say it is very important to work hard get ahead in life; 57% disagreed with the statement that success is pretty much determined by forces outside of our control. Only 20% supported the idea that hard work is no guarantee to be successful.

...the ways that we explain poverty have different implications for the types of policies that we support.

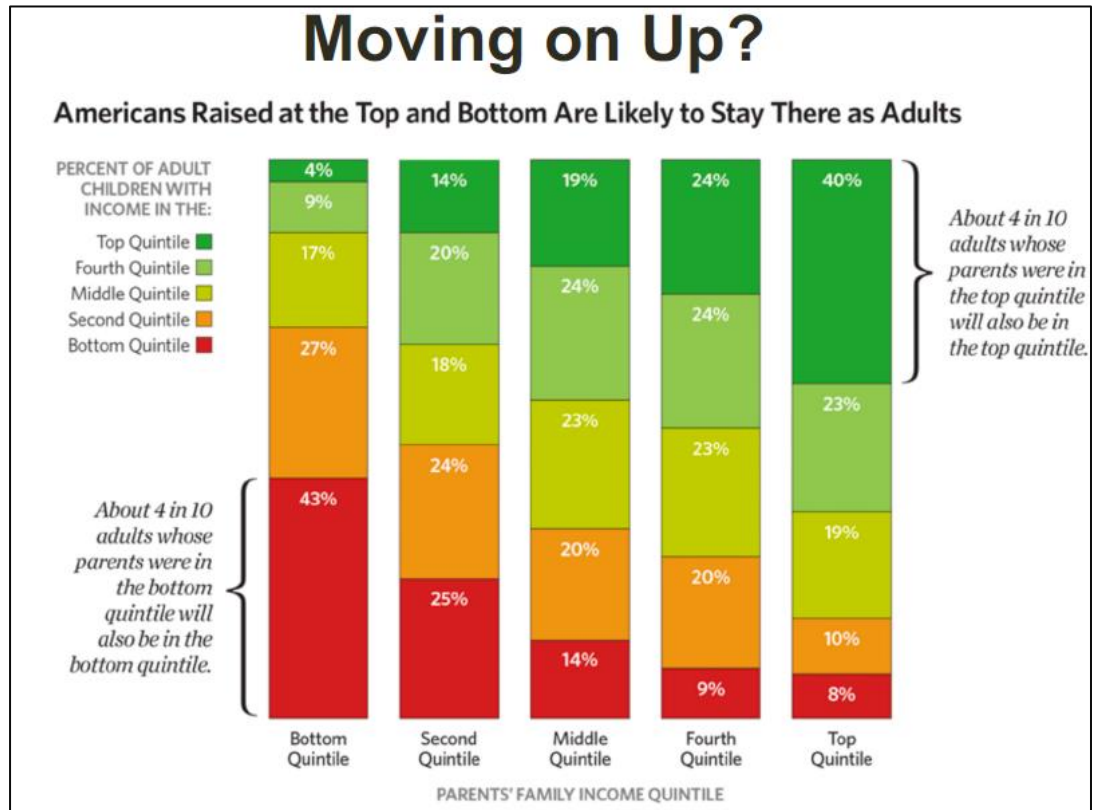
In the United States there are three dominant attributes, or types of explanations, that people give for poverty. Individualism attributes poverty to laziness, disinterest, lack of motivation, and the inability to make wise choices, all stereotypical views of low-income people. Structural attributions focus on the role of society in creating or causing poverty: things like underfunded schools, low-paying jobs, and discrimination against low-income groups and people of color. Fatalistic attributions center on bad luck: illness, injury, disability; things beyond the individual's control.

Since the 1970s, researchers have noted a strong pull toward individualistic attributions. However, the type of attribution made varies depending on who is making it. European Americans, middle income groups, and men tend to make more individualistic attributions. Low income groups and people of color are more likely to make structural

attributions for poverty to causes outside the individual's control. In the United States, fatalistic attributions are not particularly popular. There are no good or bad beliefs; Bullock said, they could all be true, but beliefs and the ways that we explain poverty have different implications for the types of policies that we support.

According to Bullock, in the United States, people tend to lean toward attributing wealth to positive individualistic causes, such as ambition, willingness to take risks, intelligence, perseverance, and hard work, or to structural causes that focus on privilege or structure: attending elite schools and universities, inheritance, and better opportunities that come from being born into a wealthy family. People with more power and status tend to embrace individualistic explanations for wealth, to see it as a sign of their positive attributes rather than unearned privilege, good luck, corruption, influence, or an economic system that allows the rich to take unfair advantage of the poor.

That individualistic pull is self-protective, said Bullock, "it's really threatening to think or imagine



Note: income is adjusted for family size
 Source: Pew Charitable Trusts Economic Mobility Project, Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility Across Generations, July 2012 www.pewtrusts.org

that you could experience poverty. It's a lot easier to distance yourself from that and say, it can't happen to me because I'm working harder, or I work hard and everything I've gotten is because of my merit, because of my skills and my talent, my hard work." It can be threatening to look at statistics on downward mobility and the extent to which we have economic inequality.

Attributions for poverty are highly partisan, with some really stark divides between Republicans, who strongly support the statement that a person is poor generally because of lack of effort on their part and that a person is rich because they work harder, while Democrats see things in the opposite way. Republicans are also more satisfied with the opportunity for a person in this nation to get ahead by working hard. In terms of fairness, 84% of Democrats see the U.S. economic system as unfairly skewed, while only 36% of Republicans feel that way.

These attributions for poverty and wealth feed into the types of policies that we support. Those with individualistic attributions for poverty and wealth want to spend less on safety net programs and to increase restrictions on them. Those with structural attributions want more progressive welfare policies and a more progressive tax system. "It's just it's common sense," said Bullock, "if you think that people are poor because they're not working hard or they're lazy, why would you want to spend money on those programs? If you think

that wealthy people are wealthy because they worked really hard, why would you want to redistribute those funds?"

Bullock noted that people are much more supportive of redistribution when it's actually framed as addressing inequality. Taking from one group and giving it to another: not so popular in the United States; but the idea of addressing inequality or opportunity is much more likely to get more buy-in.

According to Bullock, it's really foundational to the American dream that people can move up the socio-economic ladder, but increasingly what we're seeing from people who study mobility and track over time how families fare, is that there's actually a lot less mobility than we perceive there to be. About four in ten adults whose parents were born into the bottom quintile, the lowest 20 percent of earners, are very likely to remain in that quintile and find it much harder to move up to that top quintile. On the flip side, said Bullock, people born into the wealthy top quintile are much more likely to stay there.

Research has shown that people grossly overestimate the likelihood of moving up the socio-economic ladder and underestimate the likelihood of moving down it by comparing actual rates of mobility with people's estimated rates of mobility. As a way of testing people's perceptions of the racial income gap and the racial wealth gap, they asked participants how much they think the

average black family earns for every 100 dollars earned by an average white family. According to the Census Bureau, black families in America earned just \$57.30 for every \$100 of income earned by their white counterparts. Then they asked how much wealth they thought the average black family accumulated compared to the average white family. The answer is \$5.04. "It's just really getting us to think about the degree to which we

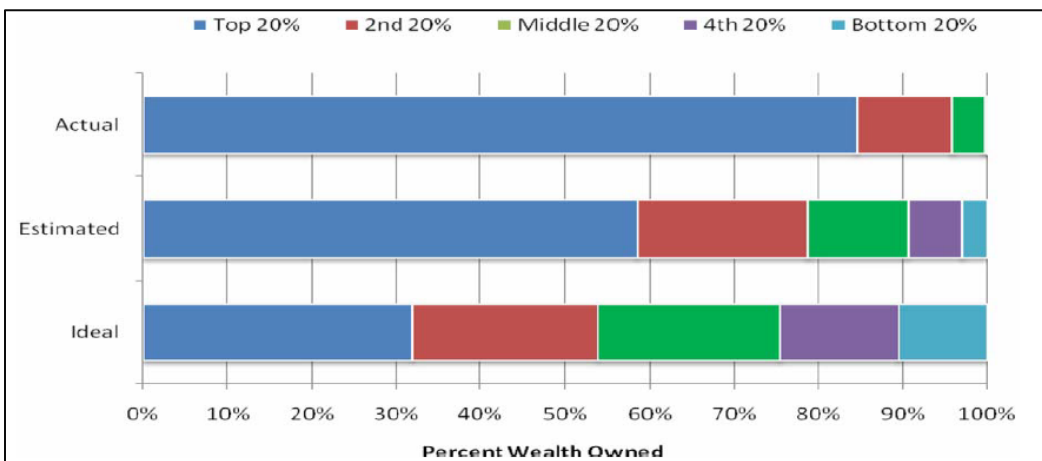


Fig. 2. The actual United States wealth distribution plotted against the estimated and ideal distributions across all respondents. Because of their small percentage share of total wealth, both the "4th 20%" value (0.2%) and the "Bottom 20%" value (0.1%) are not visible in the "Actual" distribution.

Resource distribution does not align with preference

Norton & Ariely

don't even recognize how unequal things are," said Bullock, "That's really the point of this; it's not to shame people, but to get people thinking, wow this is deep and profound."

According to a recent poll, most Americans think the wealthy aren't taxed enough. The majority of Americans perceive people at the top as paying too little in federal taxes. While there is a rising tide of believing that people at the top are not paying enough taxes, it's also true that the government doesn't always follow public opinion. Bullock gives the example of increasing the minimum wage, which is supported by the majority of people in the U.S. Although it's happening at state and regional levels, it isn't happening at the federal level. "It's also the case," said Bullock, "that there's no way we're going to have a major tax shift without blowback."

It is a source of power, strength, and hope that the system we have is not actually the one that people want.

When people were asked to estimate the distribution of wealth in the US, they came close, but tended to guess things were less unequal than they actually are. To Bullock, the interesting part is that, when asked to envision their ideal of how wealth would be distributed, the top twenty percent still has a really big slice of the pie, but it's a lot different than the reality in that the distribution is more even and much less weighted to the top. She sees it as a source of power, strength, and hope that the system we have is not actually the one that people want.

Bullock recognizes how difficult it will be to challenge the attitudes and beliefs that lead us to legitimize inequality and to view such unequal distribution as acceptable. "Whatever happens next around inequality," she said, "it's going to be a bumpy ride."

—Pam Newbury, VOTER Editor

View a [video of this program](https://lwvsc.org/videos) at lwvsc.org/videos

Riding the Climate Change Tsunami

Global warming realities, dangers, and responses

Editor's note: The effects of climate change don't lie in some distant, misty future: in many ways the climate change tsunami is already lapping at our doorstep and will soon be crashing over us. If we start running now, we have a chance to save ourselves by getting to higher ground. If we stand and stare at the approaching wave without acting, hoping it won't reach us or that we can somehow survive by swimming or hanging onto something, the outlook is grim.

In this report, Professor Oppenheimer gives us the bad news of where we're at, but encourages us to do all we can to prevent the worst. Some people can do big things to change the warming trend, but it will take all of us doing every small, medium, or large thing we can to move us out of harm's way.

In February the LWV of Massachusetts featured a webinar with Professor Michael Oppenheimer of Princeton University, an internationally-recognized authority on climate science and a long-time participant in the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Oppenheimer brought together the conclusions from two reports on climate change released in the fall of 2018. The October special report from the UN IPCC asked, "How warm is too warm? When does climate change become dangerous?" The November release of the Fourth National Climate Assessment by the U.S. government examined current and future climate change impacts on the U.S. In his webinar presentation, Oppenheimer used information from the reports to show that the danger is already here by some measures for some people, how close to the edge we really are, and how we can best respond.

More frequent extreme heat events, more deluges, a more acidic ocean, and the destruction of some ecosystems, such as coral reefs and the arctic, are attributable to the increase in greenhouse gasses. It's possible that the increase in category 4 and 5 hurricanes and the end of crop yield growth are as well. Sea level rise projections are increasing, rare killer heat waves are becoming the norm, and hurricanes plus sea level rise have created a deadly combo.

Current carbon dioxide levels are the highest they've been in a million years; recent warming

Membership in the League of Women Voters is open to men and women of voting age who are U.S. citizens. Others are welcome to join the League as associate members.

Send your check payable to League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County or LWVSCC with this form to LWVSCC, Box 1745, Capitola, CA 95010-1745.

___ \$65.00 Individual annual membership

___ \$100.00 Two members in a household

___ \$10.00 Student membership

___ Contribution \$ _____

Checks made out to LWVSCC are not tax deductible.

To make a tax-deductible donation, write a separate check to LWV Education Fund.

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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

At lwvma.org/lwvma-2017-climate-and-energy-solutions-series you can view a [recording of this webinar](#) and see the [slides from the presentation](#). While you're there, check out the other interesting presentations in the LWV of Massachusetts Climate and Energy Solutions Series.

mostly results from greenhouse gas buildup. The trend is clear that sea level rise is due to warming oceans, melting mountain glaciers, and disintegrating polar ice sheets. Things can only get worse from here unless transformative action is taken immediately.

The current scientific view is that a 1.5- or 2-degree Celsius increase above pre-industrial temperatures is a dangerous tipping point, and we're already one degree above that. We are possibly near a tipping point where the danger of a global average of six feet of sea level rise by 2100 is possible, a change that would be irreversible.

Oppenheimer stressed that, while no additional warming is good, there is a benefit to keeping the degree of warming as low as possible. One point five degrees of warming is less dangerous than if we go up to two degrees. We'd save more of our coral reefs, have less coastal flooding, and have less sea level rise. A 2-degree rise is better than a 2.5-degree increase, which is better than 3 or 4 degrees. A 4-degree world would be ecologically disastrous and socially unmanageable. It's not accurate or helpful to say we're done for if we miss 1.5 or 2 degrees, Oppenheimer said, "every bit of reduction helps."

To keep warming under 1.5 degrees, we'd need to reduce global emissions by 45% by 2030. A 20% cut in emissions by 2030 would keep warming at 2 degrees. Meeting either of those targets is very difficult and unlikely, Oppenheimer said, and would probably require expensive removal of carbon dioxide that has already been emitted.

Keeping warming close to the 1.5- or 2-degree objective is ultimately about system transformation: compact settlement, efficient transportation and electric power production, and more efficient consumption. Such changes require improvement of governance and evolving social norms more than novel technologies. At the federal level, that would mean the decarbonization of electricity production: the end of coal. At the state level, with the help of federal funds, we could modernize the grid and develop storage to fully-enable renewable energy. State-level policies could push energy efficiency even higher with efficient transportation and shorter commutes. At state and local levels, work could be done to enhance adaptation and reverse deforestation.

Oppenheimer listed five "mega goals" that we should start working on now: figure out how to communicate information about climate change better, elect better leaders, capture generational energy at all levels of society, work at all levels of governance, and combat anti-science attitudes.

The more we delay, Oppenheimer stressed, the tougher the choices. Testing the limits of our ability to adapt to climate change is the worst choice.

—Pam Newbury, VOTER Editor