



# Santa Cruz VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

April 2020

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## Calendar

Tuesday, April 14

10 a.m. to noon

LWVSCC Board Meeting

To be conducted via email

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Submit comments in advance to

[league@lwwscc.org](mailto:league@lwwscc.org)

## President's Message

On February 22, our local League celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the League of Women Voters with a wonderful centennial celebration at the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History. We had a large turnout for the gala luncheon, with some attendees wearing period costumes. Attendees enjoyed live music by a woodwind quintet, and later sung songs of the suffragists led by Karen Smith and Madeline McCaul, accompanied by Mike Rotkin on guitar (see photos on pages 5 and 6).

Our featured speaker, Santa Cruz City Councilmember Cynthia Mathews, delivered a fascinating talk, "Celebrating the Women's Vote Centennial: Historic Milestone, Contemporary Relevance", skillfully weaving together the story of the long campaign leading to passage of the 19th amendment with the personal story of her suffragist great-grandmother, contemporary issues in the struggle for equal rights, and the League's role in advancing these core democratic goals. The excellent video presentation that we viewed increased the impact of this presentation.

Thank you to all who came, including many local community leaders and members who have been important in history of our local League. Our gratitude to program chair Stephanie Harlan for making the arrangements for this event and printing extra suffragist song books, to our event co-sponsor, the Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast, to Geri McGillicuddy and Lydia Parker for doing the check-in, to Karen Smith for her help with refreshments, to Peggy Marketello for providing the flowers, and to all who took pictures, including Pam Newbury, Karen Smith, and Maggie Barr.

The centennial is not over, and we will be sharing insights this coming year as we learn more about the lives of the subversive women who braved social disapproval and even death so that women today might have the right to vote. We realize that the right to vote is a human right, and will continue the fight against voter suppression into the next centennial.

—Barbara Lewis, President LWVSCC



LWVSCC President Barbara Lewis, in suffragist costume, addressing the audience at our celebration of the League's 100 birthday.

## Voter Service Report

The Voter Service team would like to share part of an email from Stephanie Doute, Executive Director of the California League of Women Voters:

“As we assess the California primary and look to the November general election, and as we assess the potential impact of COVID-19 on the general election, we have a clear call to work to empower voters and defend democracy in our state.”

What this will look like in the coming months we do not know, but we will continue to keep you informed by email and our Santa Cruz VOTER newsletter.

At a national level, the League has been vocal in defending the rights of voters during this time of national crisis. The League has called on congress to adopt a number of key policy measures and to appropriate at least \$2 billion in the upcoming Coronavirus economic stimulus legislation to ensure both the public's safety and an inclusive and fair voting process for 2020 primary and general elections.

Given the severe and ongoing threat posed by COVID-19, the [League believes that the implementation of comprehensive policies](#) that ensure expanded voter registration, in-person early voting, no-excuse absentee voting by mail, voter education, and safe in-person voting on Election Day are critical measures that states must take for upcoming elections.

—Dottie Fry and Sue Becker  
Voter Services Co-Chairs

**Update:** As we are going to press, we received this communication from the National League.

“On Friday, the House of Representatives is expected to pass the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, providing \$2 trillion in economic relief to Americans, including \$400 million for funding elections. While we called for substantially more funding to expand voting options this fall, we are committed to working with elected officials to use the available funding and we hope to see election funding prioritized in the next round of stimulus relief, expected later next month.”

## Schools and Communities First Initiative on Track to Qualify for November

Over the last few months, League members across the state have been collecting signatures to qualify the Schools and Communities First initiative for the November, 2020 ballot in California. We reached our overall goal of 1.6 million signatures, and petitions have been turned in to the California Secretary of State for verification. We are looking forward to hearing that the initiative has qualified soon.

The SCF initiative will close loopholes in California's property tax laws that have allowed large corporations and wealthy investors to use complicated schemes to avoid paying their fair share of property taxes. By closing these loopholes, SCF will reclaim \$12 billion dollars every year; those dollars will go directly to our schools and local communities. This initiative will not affect homeowners, renters, or agricultural land. Small businesses that own property valued at less than \$3 million will be exempt from reassessment, and all businesses will get a \$500,000 exemption from the business personal property tax.

Look for more information about local SCF educational events coming soon.

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## Local Programs Proposed for 2020/2021

The LWVSCC board has approved a slate of proposed programs for our next fiscal year. Proposed programs include: how the county and local municipalities will respond to climate change, sea level rise, and coastal retreat; how the growing and powerful cannabis industry in Santa Cruz County will impact our community; an update on the status of housing and homelessness in the county and a review of what progress has been made; an exploration of the gap between the farmworker community and those of us who enjoy the fruits of their hard labor; and informational meetings on the Schools and Communities First initiative (should it qualify for the November 2020 ballot).

# The Road to Woman Suffrage

## *Fomenting rebellion from Santa Cruz to D.C.*

At our League's celebration of 100 years since the founding of the LWV, guest speaker Cynthia Mathews spoke about the historic milestones of the fight for woman suffrage. Mathews, a six-term member of the Santa Cruz City Council and former mayor, has a unique connection to the suffrage movement through her great grandmother, who played a role in moving the cause forward.

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*If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation.*

*Abigail Adams*

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Mathews began her talk with a nod to Abigail Adams' prescient admonition to her husband, John Adams, as he worked to draft the Declaration of Independence at the Continental Congress in 1776. A forward thinker, Abigail Adams' kicked off the battle for women's rights when she wrote, "... in the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation." Well, they didn't remember the ladies, and we did foment rebellion.

In 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton called the woman's rights convention in Seneca Falls, the first public meeting to focus on the rights of women. It was there, said Mathews, that Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony came together and clicked as partners. Soon thereafter, Susan B. Anthony began the devotion of her life to spreading the word and fighting for woman

suffrage, writing her own tracts, and traveling around the country.

The women's movement, emphasized Mathews, paralleled and became intertwined with the abolitionist movement in addressing the basic rights that define what it means to be an American: the ability to own property, get an education, have custody of your children.

In the 1860s, the Civil War put the woman suffrage movement "on hold" as women's efforts went to supporting the civil war efforts. Constitutional amendments passed during and after the Civil War abolished slavery, defined citizenship, and gave the right to vote specifically to any "male" over the age of 21. "The suffragists were kind of frosted by that," said Mathews, because women had felt that they "were in it together" with the abolitionists. That set loose a renewed effort to advance woman suffrage. In 1869, Wyoming territory became the first government in the world to give women the vote.

Mathews turned the focus to Santa Cruz, telling the story of renowned stagecoach driver Charley Parkhurst, who, born a woman, chose to live most of his life as a man. Parkhurst registered to vote in Santa Cruz County. He was thought to have voted in the 1868 presidential election between Ulysses Grant and Horatio Seymour, becoming the first person assigned female at birth to cast a ballot in California for a presidential election.

Another local woman, Georgiana Bruce Kirby, helped forward the local suffrage movement. Kirby, an English woman who had come to the United States in her teens, lived for a time at the Brook Farm in Massachusetts, which at that time was the epicenter for intellectual thought. She moved to the Midwest to teach, where she was influenced by Eliza Farnham, a radical suffragist and reformist about women's prisons. They became close friends, and when Farnham moved to California in 1850, Kirby accompanied her.

By 1869, Santa Cruz had grown to a city of about one thousand people. Kirby stayed connected to eastern thought and the suffrage movement through subscriptions to magazines. As an educated person and respected community leader, Kirby invited Susan B. Anthony to come speak in Watsonville. "It was really a ground



game,” said Mathews, “that’s how you got your message across.”

Across the country, women began challenging voting laws by attempting to register to vote. These test cases attempted to prove that rights granted by the 14th and 15th amendments should allow women to vote. In 1871, Ellen Van Valkenburg, a local widow running the paper mill she inherited from her husband, went down to the Santa Cruz county clerk and, as a tax payer, business owner, and US citizen, attempted to register to vote. When her registration was challenged, the case went all the way to the California Supreme Court, where the court ruled against her.

At this point, suffragists were working state by state to get the vote. California made a big push in 1896, with support from Susan B. Anthony and Carrie Chapman Catt, (who would go on to found the LWV). The California campaign, while well-organized, failed to win the vote for women, but they came within a few thousand votes. This scenario was not unusual; in many states they tried, failed, and tried again.

In 1908, California tried again, this time launching an inclusive campaign that involved labor and ethnic groups and had chapters all over the state, including the rural Central Valley. “This was an overwhelming victory,” said Mathews, “So California came online.”

In 1909, Carrie Chapman Catt formed the woman suffrage party. As a young teacher in Iowa, Catt became interested in the suffrage movement, and she helped organize the movement in the Midwest. Her work in Colorado helped deliver a quick victory for suffragists. Mathews gave homage to Catt and others like her, who, in their mid-20s, became involved in the suffrage movement and devoted their lives to it, “This was a group that became very powerful in the fight.”

Mathews told the story of another California woman who played a significant part in the suffrage movement, Sara Bard Field, Mathew’s own great grandmother. Field, a small but exceedingly charismatic person, had been active as an organizer for the movement when, in 1915, Alice Paul recruited her to take 50,000 signatures on a petition to President Wilson. Driving across the country from September to December of that year in an open-air car, they frequently stopped for



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*League-founder Carrie Chapman Catt on the passing of the 19th amendment: “This is a glorious and wonderful day. I have lived to realize the big beautiful dream of my life—the enfranchisement of women.”*

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speaking engagements and events in cities and towns across the country. In December, they delivered the petition to President Wilson in Washington, D.C. At the time, Wilson, who was enduring regular picketing at the White House, was, said Mathews, “in everybody’s crosshairs at this time on the suffrage movement, so he was not exactly being cooperative at that time.” Nonetheless, Wilson received the petition, and said he would consider it.

At this time, in 1917, World War One was happening, and women were asked to take care of farms, work in factories, and join the service while the men were fighting the war. After the war, women pointed out that, after all they had done, asking for one thing, enfranchisement, was little

enough to ask in return. "It was a pretty powerful message," said Mathews.

After the war, Congress was in a more receptive mood, and Carrie Chapman Catt asked Congress to approve the amendment to enfranchise women; in June of 1919, Congress passed the amendment. Then ensued the battle for ratification by the states. After 70 years of organizing, the movement had experienced people all over the country who were committed to work hard on ratification. On August 18, 1920, Tennessee ratified the amendment, thus achieving its approval by three-fourths of the states, the 19th amendment giving women the right to vote became part of the constitution.

## 19<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT

"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

Mathews quoted the sentiments of suffragist and League-founder Carrie Chapman Catt on the passing of the 19th amendment: "This is a glorious and wonderful day. I have lived to realize the big beautiful dream of my life—the enfranchisement of women."

The energies of the suffrage movement were redirected to the need to educate and inform the new voters through the newly-formed League of Women Voters. They soon took up causes such as child welfare, education, health, gainful occupation for women, and independence for married women.

Mathews, who has voted in every election since she was able to, voiced her appreciation for the League's work in keeping voters informed: "The League would study the issues, give you the pros and cons, and let you make up your own mind... Who

do you trust? I think that's been the League's stock-in-trade for many years."

Mathews concluded by drawing connections between many of the movements that were congealing in the early 20th century and how they were all intertwined and connected to bring us where we are today. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was concerned about voting rights, education, and access to public facilities; all a key part of what they are still doing. The American Civil Liberties Union, formed in the early 1900s to defend conscientious objectors in World War One, then expanded to address all the basic freedoms. The environmental movement began with establishments of the national parks by Teddy Roosevelt. Immigration saw a big surge in the period from 1900 to 1920, and it is one of the big topics that confronts us now. The labor movement began then also, and is still active today. And, of course, the women's movement has expanded from registering and informing women voters to promoting the election of women and working to achieve equity for women.

These movements all depend on reaching out and making connections with each other in the race through time. Mathews concluded, "The word of our time is intersectionality: how no one of these causes proceeds on its own path."

—Pam Newbury, *VOTER Editor*



League members and guests sport costumes in the suffragist spirit. From left: Jan Karwin, Sue Becker, Lydia Nogales Parker, Kit Hein, Barbara Lewis, Valerie Mishkin, Tiffany Salinas, Eve Roberson.



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 LWVC 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.

*Right: A full house celebrates the League's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday with a round of suffragist songs.*

## League Response to COVID-19

In a March 12 letter to LWV leaders, California League President Carol Moon Goldberg and Executive Director Stephanie Doute directed us to avoid in-person League meetings and events, and they shared these words of wisdom: "So many of us today are wishing that maybe we could just have one or two dull moments, or that maybe we lived in less interesting times. Between the stock market crash and COVID-19, we are on the leading edge of a global crisis that requires steady leadership, caution without panic, the nimbleness to work in times where nothing is business as usual, and a deep compassion for each other."

Because of the novel coronavirus, California League leadership has directed Leagues not to schedule public or in-person meetings. In accordance with this directive, our local LWVSCC board has decided to do our April board meeting business via email. Members who have business they would like to bring before the board may do so by sending an email to [league@lwvsc.org](mailto:league@lwvsc.org). In addition, we are not scheduling any member meetings or programs at the present time. We will keep members apprised of further developments and plans for our Santa Cruz County League.



*Left: Karen Smith and Madeline McCaul lead suffragist songs accompanied by Mike Rotkin on guitar.*

