



Santa Cruz VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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Calendar

Wednesday, March 9, 2022, 10 a.m.—noon
LWVSCC Board Meeting

If you wish to attend, contact us at league080@gmail.com

And - Keep these upcoming events in mind
More information will be coming:

Saturday, May 21, 11:00 a.m.
Climate Conversation with Gary Griggs
Distinguished Professor of Earth and Planetary Sciences, He is also Director of the Institute of Marine Sciences at UCSC (and a fascinating speaker).

Saturday, June 11
LWVSCC Annual Meeting
Plan on attending and find out what our Local League is planning for the year ahead.

Interested in Redistricting?

Here is a link to the new district maps for both federal and state offices:
[redistricting maps](#)

[Join the League](#), renew your membership, or [make a donation](#) online at lwvsc.org.

[Find us on Facebook.](#)

President's Message



Like the suffragists who fought so long and hard for women's right to vote, we are in the fight to make democracy work for the long haul. In keeping with this goal, at our National Program Planning meeting on February 16, League of Women Voters members present unanimously supported continuing the Campaign for Making Democracy Work (which includes Voting Rights, Improving Elections, Redistricting, and Money in Politics) as a LWVUS program priority for 2022-24. We also recommended another program item in addition, based on the suggestion from VOTER Editor Marilyn Radisch. Since climate change, immigration, and the refugee crisis as related concerns will impact most aspects of our society, the composition of our population, and the future existence of the human race on our planet, we supported League advocacy in these areas, which can be done based on current national positions. Since the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted existing problems with our health care system and the need to update our national health care position, our Santa Cruz County Board of Directors voted unanimously at our February 9 meeting, following careful review of the suggested update, to support a concurrence with the health care position update adopted by the New York State League and to have this proposal included in the agenda at the upcoming LWVUS convention, which will be happening from June 23-26 in Denver, Colorado and be hybrid this year. Features of the proposed health care update were shared at the National Program Planning on February 16.

—Barbara Lewis, President LWVSCC

What Your State Legislators are Thinking About

In this edition of the VOTER, we have a lot of input from your state legislators in answer to four questions the League is asking of all California legislators. We will list each question and follow with the answers from State Senator John Laird and State Assemblymember Mark Stone. (We are waiting for the finalized responses from Assemblymember Robert Rivas and will publish those once we do receive them.)

On January 21, State Senator John Laird was interviewed by members of the Leagues in each of the counties he represents. These members include, from the Monterey County League, Tama Olver, who acted as the legislative interview coordinator; and Gail Morton, who served as recorder for questions #1 and #3. From the San Luis Obispo County League, Janice Carr asked question #1, and Julie Rodewald acted as recorder for questions #2 and #4. From the San Jose/Santa Clara League, Rebecca Guerra asked question #3. From the Santa Cruz County League, Marilyn Radisch asked question #2 and Barbara Lewis asked Question #4 and acted as backup. Other attendees included Marie Arnold from the San Jose/Santa Clara League and Anne Quinn from the San Luis Obispo League.

Assemblymember Mark Stone was interviewed on February 4 by the following members of Leagues in his district: From the Santa Cruz League- Barbara Lewis was the legislative interview coordinator, Lydia Parker served as recorder and asked Question 3, Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson-asked Question 4, and Nancy Litvak handled Zoom set up and audio recording. From the Monterey County League, Sharon Miller asked Question 1, and Marianne Gawain-Davis attended as backup. From the San Jose/Santa Clara League - Paula Radzinski-asked Question 2, and Sandy Mory and Marie Arnold attended to provide backup. Assemblymember Mark Stone's Field Representatives from the Santa Cruz County office attending were Andrea Eberle and Perla Ornelas-Perez.

Question #1 dealt with redistricting. Redistricting is complicated and the question had several parts.

These are Senator John Laird's responses to each: What changes, if any, would you support for the next redistricting cycle in 2031? Laird first recapped the issues that the Redistricting Commission had to face, including delayed information from the 2020 census. Also, the Commission redefined communities of interest, but did not respect cities and counties in that redefinition.

Do you support expansion of the current requirements for cities and counties to school district and/or special district redistricting? He does support this expansion, but first they should move to honor cities and counties.

Does he support an independent commission for local jurisdictions? He generally favors this, but he wants to review the experience in Los Angeles for direction on how to craft state legislation.

Should outreach and transparency requirements be expanded? He feels they should be expanded, but recognized it was difficult in this cycle due to census delays.

Here are Assemblymember Mark Stone's comments on redistricting:

The more consistency we have on how redistricting is done, then ideally, the outcome will display a common knowledge of the process. People understand state redistricting generally; however, it is different at the local level. I am in favor of the commissions, and the more independent they are from the policy makers, the better. Transparency is paramount. This year, there was a time crunch, impacted by both the pandemic and interference at the federal level regarding the census. There needs to be scrutiny on the census side of the process: we need to be sure everyone is counted. If the census is clean and timely, then the redistricting commissions can do their work. It appears that the commission was focused on the more urban areas and rural areas were appended to those more heavily populated areas. Any commission needs to focus on communities of interest in the broadest sense, so as not to create imbalances and leave some areas disconnected. Santa Cruz assembly districts are a case in point. In the future, Santa Cruz County and the Monterey Bay Region have lost a voice. The way we have drawn boundaries doesn't make a lot of sense. There are common interests, like watersheds, which were divided up without thoughtful consideration about representation. Local level independent commissions are fine, but work needs to be done to define what communities of interest really are, and how representation should work. County boundaries, watersheds, population centers, and communities of interest need to be part of what representation looks like.

Question #2 dealt with climate change, water, and equity. What do you see as ways California can help underserved communities, while dealing with the water effects of climate change upon the state? Please tell us about both proposed and potential legislation and funding sources.

Senator Laird's response:

The climate is changing, and the design of our water system is premised on *past* climate. California has nearly 43 million residents requiring a sustainable water supply *based on the current conditions*. Even before this drought, a million Californians did not have access to safe, clean, affordable water.

There needs to be a shift in the water system design to meet California's needs. We will have sustainable groundwater over time. Changes include cuts in some places. Declining snowpack and less rain require more reliance on water storage and development of the means to convey water. New infrastructure is needed to bridge the wet and dry years, and to provide sustainable water to communities who do not currently have it.

How to finance the development of this sustainable water supply has not been identified. Laird's predecessor, Bill Monning, sought funding via the addition of an assessment on rates paid in every existing water district. For districts, especially those on the Central Coast, the addition of a state assessment was particularly problematic, given that districts are already struggling to generate sufficient revenues to meet their own infrastructure needs. An increase in rates for improvements outside of district boundaries, while in-district needs go unmet, was not acceptable to ratepayers.

Senator Laird thinks part of the solution is for challenged water districts to be annexed into surrounding water districts. However, annexation may create inequity if existing districts have raised money for improvements and the newcomers are getting a free ride. Financial remuneration may be needed for acceptance of this approach. Laird asserts this is a logical place for use of some of the one-time money in the state surplus.

A second source of funding is Cap-and-Trade. Given that enactment of Cap-and-Trade was intended to combat climate change and provide benefit to disadvantaged and low-income communities, use of these funds to redress the impacts of climate change on water is appropriate.

Something must be done. Laird wants to work on this difficult issue.

Assemblymember Stone's response:

Not much has been proposed that is going to accomplish much. The premise is that California has done a great job in establishing clean water and clean air standards. However, if you take a close look at the community level, especially at ports and in poorer areas that get the dregs of water and water supplies, you see they are suffering the most. We have looked at the top level but have not looked at the details to understand the impact on communities. The Legislature is working hard to build environmental justice concepts into most policy. The Coastal Commission has done that. They have environmental guidelines to follow. Clean air and clean water policies in recent years have had an environmental justice component. For example, the Exide battery plant in LA was located in a poor area

and allowed to exist for years, even after more than 100 violations dealing with toxic waste were found. Oil extraction is another issue. Oil wells in Beverly Hills are enclosed and contained. There are setbacks from schools and public exposure because that is a wealthy community. Yet, in nearby LA, there are oil wells adjacent to schools, urban areas, homes and gathering places, without any setbacks and the politics around that issue have become ugly. The inequities are stark. We have tried to enforce setbacks and clean air regulations in the oil extraction process. When policy is focused on environmental justice, and not just environmentalism, we end up with different calculations and we put our emphasis in different areas.

The difficulty in the western economy is that 90% of the money is in private hands, leaving only 10% in government hands, yet people look to government to fund solutions. Government cannot afford it. It is an inappropriate expectation. We need to consider taxing carbon to raise the resources to allow governments to make investments in adapting to the changing climate. If there is a clean solution that is less expensive, then the clean solution will be the industry choice. Clean technologies and strategies are very popular in California, though not in the Legislature and not in the industrial sector. Taxing carbon would change behaviors, and would allow investments to be made, especially in underserved communities. We need to electrify the transportation sector, as many of these transportation corridors exist in these underserved communities. The solutions are hard to implement, due to the political landscape. The Legislature is putting an emphasis on environmental justice, even as we try to understand what environmental justice means.

Question #3 dealt with California's children and youth mental health emergency:

California's new Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative - Detailed Proposal, which allocates \$4.4 billion over five years to address these issues, may help reform our overburdened system. However, there have been recommendations made for further legislative action to ensure success. What more needs to be done to address the mental health needs of California's children and youth? Do you anticipate proposing or supporting any legislation to confront the growing problem?

Senator Laird's Response:

Senator Laird recognizes a big gap in services, which was exacerbated by the pandemic. He sees the issue is a budget issue and not necessarily a bill issue. He does anticipate supporting efforts to improve funding and expansion of services.

Laird serves on the education budget subcommittee and is taking a bifurcated approach to this issue. He thinks they should make recommendations once the funding is known and can be included in the Governor's May budget revise. They need to know if there is enough money in the budget and if it is being wisely spent. As to whether the money is targeted for mental health or education, there are billions in the budget for mental health, but mental health funds targeted for children do not get to the schools. To resolve these issues, Laird feels it is critical to coordinate between the Health and Human Services and Education Committees. He is working with the Chair of Health and Human Services to make this a reality.

Assemblymember Stone's Response:

The mental health system in California has long been fractured. Focusing on children's health is one way to reform the system. There has been a notion to tackle the entire mental health system; however, current attitudes and cultures within the Health and Human Services Agency have made that very difficult to do. Since money has been allocated for children's mental health, the same problem does not exist in this arena. Within both the child welfare system and the delinquency system, resources are available for the children hardest to serve. Since 2016, therapeutic care has been delivered through these systems. Often, however, children were placed in group homes that were not serving the children at the levels expected.

Care reform had mental health services and behavioral health services built into the process up front. However, the system wanted to see a diagnosis before services could be reimbursed, so the client needed to be in crisis before services became reimbursable. Counties, therefore, could not provide innovative programs up front. Some counties moved kids out of state because they did not have the capacity for kids with a high level of need.

Kids in the child welfare system and the delinquency system often enter with trauma. They have behavioral health needs that are not addressed. There is a need to get the behavioral health system to provide that help up front. Last year, we developed a pilot program that was funded and put into law, where small facilities, mental health based and therapeutic based, addressed kids with a high level of acuity. This year, we are expanding those pilot programs to any kid in crisis, not necessarily just those in the delinquency and dependency systems. There needs to be a way for them to transition into appropriate placements, like their families or a resource family. This will be a healthier

way to address mental health needs, and, if expanded to include any kid in crisis, we can reach more kids.

We can start with this smaller population because everybody cares about kids. Then we can transfer these concepts into the adult realm. We are on the cusp of this innovative process. This is like current processes in Santa Clara County and Santa Cruz County, where there is access to services before a child needs to be removed from a home. Resources available as needed means kids will be less likely to get into trouble, since they have a stable home, stable relationships, feel they belong and are loved, and have their underlying adverse childhood experiences addressed early. That also means addressing those adverse experiences in the parents. That is, hopefully, what we are on the cusp of doing. If we do not address these issues when they are young, the criminality, mental health, and drug abuse issues get harder to solve as they grow older. So, we should be investing at that early stage. I am very hopeful about the trajectory we are on and the investments we have made. There is a willingness to look at and use different models to serve the children of California.

Question #4 dealt with the legislator's priorities:

What other major issues do you think the legislature must deal with in 2022?

Senator Laird's priorities:

CLIMATE CHANGE: The State's long-term climate change goals of full electrification and lowering greenhouse gas emission by 2045 will only be attainable *with a strategy of identifying and achieving* interim, shorter-term goals; those attainable within 5 years and 10 years. Setting interim goals, then prioritizing the strategies to meet them is his focus. Strategies include capping every well that is potentially leaking in the state, dealing with hydrogen, greening the grid more, doing workforce training for transition out of the fossil fuel industry, among other things. Laird supports putting money into adaptation, be it to address sea level rise, water recycling, and a myriad of sub-issues.

EDUCATION: Laird will be in the middle of everything in education this year. He wants to address falling average daily attendance across the state and find a way to protect school funding; deal with the shortage of teachers and substitutes; as well as providing adequate support for higher education and student housing. The State invested \$2 billion into higher education and housing last year. How is that working? Follow-through is a priority focus.

LOCAL ISSUES: Representing local needs, including:

- Money for homelessness particularly for Santa Cruz; enabling the city to jump start addressing its homelessness crisis.
- State buy-out of local share to enable the Pajaro River Project (SB496).
- Assisted Atascadero in fixing a long-term city funding problem.
- Secured funding for the Big Sur area, for the road, the lighthouse and trail systems.
- Created a hospital district for Watsonville to buy the Watsonville Hospital.
- End the 20-year dispute of where the Big Sur Coastal Trail goes; secure funding; and get project started. State Parks is responsible for first 3.5 miles on Hearst Ranch easement.
- Conservation of 12,000 acres of Diablo Canyon lands.
- Development of wind farms off the coast of Morro Bay, for which there is money in the budget. There are disputes to resolve.

Assemblymember Stone's priorities:

- The Legislature is grappling with the effects of the pandemic, which include mental health, schools, and vaccination status.
- We have seen the death of the Healthcare Single Payer Bill, so that will be a topic.
- Wildfires, wildfire recovery, and insurance after these disasters is another topic.
- Insurance companies are considering fires, sea level rise, changing weather patterns, all of these will determine how we insure property and keep people in their homes. This is part of the larger climate conversation.
- Rather than getting water as snowpack, we now get water in larger amounts and that impacts how we gather water.
- Water, water supply, storms, climate effects, wildfire resources are all major topics in addition to housing, transportation, and the myriad of policies the Legislature has been struggling with over the last few years.

And Finally – Ways of Finding

More Information on Issues:

What's going on with the National League? (and how you can find out)

The National League of Women Voters is recommending to the National Convention that in the years 2022-2024 we continue our program from the last two years: Campaign for Making Democracy Work. All Leagues will be asked to create local programming focusing on one or more of the various aspects of Making Democracy Work: Voting Rights; Making Elections Work; Campaign Finance/Money in Politics; and Redistricting. If you would like to read more on these subtopics, please go to <https://www.lwv.org/Program>.

The League document, **Impact on Issues, 2020-2022** provides all the current LWVUS positions. We do not act on an issue if we do not have a program position that supports taking this action. We also hold some local positions on purely local topics. You can read about all of them or select the ones in which you hold a particular interest by going to <https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues>.

---Nancy Litvak, LWVSCC Program Chair

More Information Available to You:

LWVC Redistricting Webinars – Hear stories of what worked and did not work throughout the State. Help LWVC Advocacy Team to support or oppose reform in the redistricting process. Multiple opportunities to participate. Please only sign up for one session. Click on date that works best for you.

[March 9 at 6:00 PM \(Wednesday\)](#)

[March 10 at 12:00 PM \(Thursday\)](#)

[March 12 at 11:00 AM \(Saturday\)](#)

LWVUS Legislative Office Hours - Do you have questions about federal legislation? Advice on league positions on an issue? Consult on state level legislation? Concerned about supporting or opposing actions/legislation? Then office hours are perfect for you. Register [here](#)

Mar 10, 2022, 03:00 p.m. ET

Mar 24, 2022, 03:00 p.m. ET

Apr 7, 2022, 03:00 p.m. ET

LWVUS Convention will take place June 23 – 26 in Denver, CO, and online. [All currently posted information can be found here.](#)

---thanks to Ann Havlik for this information