



Santa Cruz VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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In This Issue

President’s Message.....1
 Program Planning.....2
 Legislative Interviews.....2
 Getting Involved.....7
 Women’s History Quiz.....7

Save the Date for Our Annual Meeting

Saturday, June 10, 2023

10 a.m. - noon

Seascape Golf Club

Our speaker will be Gail Pellerin

She will talk about her experiences in the Assembly.

LWVSCC Board Meeting

Wednesday, April 12, 2023

10 a.m. - noon

Online

If you wish to attend, contact Barbara Lewis

Bobbi44@gmail.com

She will send you a link to join.

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Our March 1 Local Program Planning Meeting was well attended, enjoyable, and productive, with socializing, review of some of our local positions, and several recommendations for our 2023-2024 programs resulting. Since so much happened, and we are aware that many of you were unavailable to come to our Wednesday meeting for a variety of reasons, the meeting notes, which have now received final Board approval, are being included in this VOTER in full. Thank you to Sandy Warren for hosting this meeting, to Secretary Lydia Parker for writing up what happened, and to all who participated. These notes were sent for review to all who participated and all board members before being given final approval at our March 8 meeting. Four Local Program topics have been recommended by our Board of Directors for inclusion in the Annual Meeting Kit:

- 1.Coastal sustainability and plans for adapting to climate change
2. Voting rights with emphasis on targeted voter outreach to underrepresented groups and accessing basic voter information
3. Healthcare, with a focus on mental health
4. Transportation

A majority vote will be needed at the June 10 Annual Meeting to adopt each of these program recommendations.

The LWVSCC Legislative Interviews this past month were also quite successful, with much of interest being shared by our state legislators in response to our questions. This VOTER includes the final reports that have been reviewed by participants and approved for publication. Please take the time to read this March VOTER, which has been prepared with much time and effort. Thank you to 1st Vice President Marilyn Radisch for her work on assembling this VOTER.

---Barbara Lewis, President LWVSCC



NOTES FROM THE MARCH 1 PROGRAM PLANNING MEETING

LWVSCC Local Program Planning Meeting
March 1, 2023
1:10-3:10 pm

Those in attendance: Barbara Lewis, Dorothy Fry, Kit Hein, Pam Newbury, Jane Cohen, Sandy Warren, Karen Smith, Laura Grossman, Nancy Litvak and Lydia Nogales Parker

Barbara read the position updates made in 2017, and we reviewed the positions on County Government, Health Care, Land Use, Transportation, Voters' Rights, with no further changes to positions or studies proposed at today's meeting. Programs to treat substance use disorders (SUD) and accompanying co-occurring mental health disorders. Also suggested, Climate Change: We support local government efforts to promote adaptation to climate change and sea level rise.

Barbara reminded everyone that the issues on which we choose to focus will be listed in the Annual Meeting Kit. That brunch event will be June 10, 2023, at the Seacliff Golf Club. More information will be in future issues of the VOTER.

There was discussion about the various members of our community, scientists and policy makers, who could be speakers at a program event related to one of the topics listed above. The names suggested were:
Coastal Sustainability and Climate Change: Gary Griggs, John Laird, Tiffany Wise West, and Ross Clark.
Santa Cruz County Clerk: Tricia Webber
Substance Use Disorders: Casey Swank

Some local issues recently in the news were highlighted: the new drug nitazene-iso, drug treatment capacity in our

county, Family Reunification Therapy, Health Care reform. Kit Hein remarked that the Human Trafficking presentation co sponsored by the AAUW and LWVSCC has been rescheduled for July 2023.

Another area of interest was voting rights. The emphasis would be on targeted voter outreach to underrepresented groups and accessing basic voter information.

The idea of in person meetings or Zoom gatherings was discussed. It was generally agreed that people are ready to have in person events (with recommended mask wearing).

Areas of interest which may be included in the proposed program were:

Coastal sustainability and plans for adapting to climate change.

Healthcare, with a focus on mental health.

Transportation

A panel presentation of local mayors was discussed. Mayors from Santa Cruz, Capitola, Watsonville, and Scotts Valley were suggested as possible members for such a panel. It was suggested we select one topic for discussion, for example:

Land Use (last updated in 2017)

Does it support the general plan; is it reviewed periodically?

Water conservation and Agriculture

Open Space: the preservation of local green belts

Mountain lands and watersheds

Coastal Plan

Climate Change and Sea Level Rise

It was suggested we consider co-sponsoring events with AAUW, Soroptimist, or Lions Club.

The LWVSCC Board will determine the next step in the process of programming.

---Lydia Nogales Parker, LWVSCC Secretary

LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEW REPORT – Gail Pellerin and Dawn Addis

In February, League chapters throughout the state interviewed their local Assemblymembers and Senators, asking four questions designed by the state League. These are the questions and responses from two women who represent Santa Cruz County as freshmen members of the Assembly.

Gail Pellerin represents the 28th District in the Assembly. In Santa Cruz County, the district runs from the harbor to the county line, including the communities of Davenport, Bonny

Doon, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, Felton, Ben Lomond and Boulder Creek. She also represents part of Santa Clara County. Prior to being elected to the Assembly, Gail was the chief elections officer for Santa Cruz County from 1993 until she retired in December of 2020. During that time, she also served as the President of the California Association of Clerks and Elections Officers from 2010-12. She was also co-chair of the Secretary of State's Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee. Gail is also a member of our League.

Dawn Addis represents the Assembly's 30th District, which runs up the coast from Santa Maria to just north of Salinas. It includes parts of San Luis Obispo, Monterey and Santa Cruz County, where it runs along the coast. Dawn spent years teaching in California public schools and has elementary, secondary, and special education credentials, as well as an MA in special education from San Francisco State. She is also fluent in Spanish. She co-founded the Women's March in San Luis Obispo County and served as a board member for the Planned Parenthood Central Coast Foundation. Her first elected office was on the Morro Bay City Council, where she served from 2018 to 2022.

Question 1: Shrinking California's Voter

Participation Gap. Despite the diversity of California's population, there are significant disparities in participation among youth and voters of color, compared to our older, non-Hispanic white population. There is also evidence that public awareness of new opportunities to participate in democracy is lacking and that many do not know how to access basic information, such as where to vote. In addition, a reduction of in-person voting locations (a feature of Voters Choice Act counties) has discouraged turnout of Black and Latino Californians.

- Do you believe that targeted voter outreach and education would help to shrink California's participation gap?
- Would you support funding for the Secretary of State, county elections offices and/or community-based organizations to address the problem?

Gail Pellerin: I have worked with Wendy Romero at USC, analyzing data. California has been a leader in removing barriers to voting. The fact that everybody gets a ballot in the mail is an important tool for improving voter outreach. California was the first state to include return postage to help the vote by mail process and Santa Cruz County implemented this practice before the state mandated it.

I am working on several pieces of legislation to improve voter turnout.: Currently, in a presidential primary, if you are a no party preference voter, unless you request a ballot from a party that allows a cross-over vote, you get a ballot without the office of President on it. I am working on legislation to make it easier for no-party preference voters to cross over and vote for a presidential candidate with their at-home ballot. There may be a write in space to make the process more accessible. When voting in person, voters are asked which party ballot they prefer. The Democratic Party allows that; the Libertarian Party allows it; and the American Independent Party allows it.

We need to do voter outreach in our underrepresented communities. In Santa Cruz County, we were sure to have bilingual information. However, in Santa Clara County, they have up to eleven languages now, so it is a more onerous task to get the information translated into all those languages and do it correctly. There have been errors in the past, but we are working on the problem. We do have Language Access Advisory Committees now that would provide feedback to voter officials about how to improve outreach and accessibility.

I am also a fan of ERIC: Electronic Registration Information Center. It was started in 2012, with help from the Pew Charitable Trust, a nonprofit with the sole mission of assisting states to improve the accuracy of their voter files and to increase access to voter registration for all eligible voters. It also shares data among states. In 2022, there were 32 states plus the District of Columbia, participating in the ERIC Program. I have always been a fan of California participating in this program and sharing our data. If California were in this program, other states would follow. I am working with the Secretary of State's Office on this idea. I have a bill to be proposed this year for California to join this data sharing system and improve our voter rolls.

Shasta County has gone through a transition in their Board of Supervisors where they now have legislation that allows them to throw out the use of Dominion Voting Systems, a federally qualified and state certified system. Kathy Darling Allen, the

Registrar in Shasta County, has reached out to the Secretary of State and the Department of Justice regarding this issue. There is a primary in March, as well as a presidential election in the near future, and they have no replacement system. There are discussions about this dilemma. The cost for a new system is a large expense for the taxpayers. This issue is being investigated before it sets a precedent.

California has automated registration at DMV, on-line voter registration, and access through websites. However, voter turnout in California is at 60%. If that were a grade on a test, that would be a failing grade. We need more voter registration information and more information in languages people understand.

Getting Civic Education back in our schools is important. We did a Civic Summit here in SC County with the Superintendent of Schools that was very successful. We are encouraging 16–17-year-olds to work in the polls; where they can see the importance of getting involved in voting at an early age.

Dawn Addis: She is committed to engaging voters in our democracy and developing candidates that reflect the electorate. She supports targeted voter outreach and education and also supports the funding needed for these efforts. She sees California as a leader in access to voting and expects this to continue.

She sees two major challenges to voter engagement. First, some groups don't see themselves reflected in government or in the policies office holders choose to prioritize. Second, the current level of hateful rhetoric and attacks against those in office keeps people from wanting to engage. She commented that we have a lot of work to do to fight hateful speech and gave kudos to the San Luis Obispo County LWV campaign to encourage civil discourse in local politics. She would like to see that program expanded and

understands that it would also require funding.

She noted that she participates in the Jewish and Native American caucuses in the Assembly.

Question 2: Equitable Funding for California's School Facilities Program.

Construction or modernization of school facilities is normally financed by issuing general obligation bonds at the state and local levels. Repayment of state bonds issued is financed from General Fund revenue. Local bond measures are financed by property tax increases during the lifetime of the bonds issued. California's School Facility Program provides grants to local school districts to help fund new construction and modernization.

Dependence on property taxes means that to fund school construction/modernization, taxpayers in districts with low property value per student must pay a far higher property tax rate than those in wealthier districts to raise the same amount of money per student.

- Would you advocate for changes to the School Facilities Program to reduce this inequity?
- One way to do this would be to have the School Facilities Program structured so that the required match percentage from a school district is reduced for low-wealth districts.

Gail Pellerin: I just met with the Chair of the Subcommittee on Education Funding. It is very clear that our wealthier districts have better facilities. It is something that needs to change. I spoke with him about the per pupil spending and the discrepancies between school districts. I am trying to understand the funding process formula. However, the good news is that this last budget year the governor has invested in education. We have gone from the bottom third to the top third in per pupil spending. I am hopeful that we will see better programming for our schools. The facility issue needs to be addressed, and that we see our lower property tax areas are able to build the same fabulous facilities as our more affluent districts can build. The great thing about my new position is that I know who to call to get the answers I need.

Dawn Addis: Her first political action was as a high school student, going door-to-door seeking support from homeowners for a local school bond measure. She understands that school districts with less wealth and lower rates of home ownership have more difficulty passing facility bond measures.

A school facilities bond measure is being discussed in the legislature this session and she will review it. She indicated it is important to have the data that shows that upgrades are needed and if the system should be changed, so the funds go to the districts where they are most needed

She sees that one of the positives in the current climate is that we can have a real conversation about why it is not OK to have inequity in facilities. This provides a real opportunity for change.

Question 3: Sustainable and Equitable Water Resource Management.

Climate unpredictability and drought are making it clear that the ways we are accustomed to managing water in California---for cities, for agriculture and for the environment---are neither sustainable nor equitable.

- How would you propose to transform management of California's water resources in response to changing conditions to minimize impact on food production and its associated jobs without adversely affecting food security and other users and uses of water?

Gail Pellerin: This is such a huge issue in California. It is critical to preserve and protect the water we have. It is estimated that one million Californians lack clean and safe drinking water. If California is the 4th largest economy in the world, why do we have so many people without safe drinking water? And why do we have so many people who are homeless? Why do we have farm workers in Half Moon Bay who are living in third world conditions? I am inspired by the Soquel Pure Water Project, where they are taking gray water, putting it through a purification process, and pumping it back into the ground, recharging the groundwater. That makes more sense than what we are doing with reservoirs: though they are filling up, they are subject to evaporation and contamination, so they are a limited storage capacity. Our underground storage is quite extensive. We need to maintain a good relationship with our agricultural community. They are feeding us, and we need to select crops that are less water intensive. Rice fields are

limited because of water needs, though this year it would have been feasible. Rotating crops is another good idea. I had a meeting recently with women farmers in Pescadero. Many of them sustained damage in the recent storms; they are now looking to get assistance. I like to get all the people involved around a table to work on solutions.

Dawn Addis: When she was a council member in Morro Bay, Assemblymember Addis worked on a project that moved a sewer off the beach and, at the same time, created water reclamation. She realizes the interconnectedness of the issues we face in California and knows that many areas, such as housing and water agencies, must work together to solve these problems. While we need to reclaim more water, coastline resilience is also needed, and we need to look at moving infrastructure away from the beaches. Also, as we develop water reclamation solutions, we need to protect ratepayers and ensure that they do not bear the brunt of development in heavily increased water rates.

She also recognizes that there are water issues and development of solutions going on throughout her district. In addition to the project in Morro Bay, Los Osos has completed a sewer project, Cambria has been told to implement a stop build order by the Coastal Commission, and Soquel is working on a project to stabilize their water supply, which she has visited. She has not toured Monterey One Water and would welcome the opportunity.

Question 4: Personal Priorities.

- What other major issues do you think the Legislature must deal with in 2023?
- What are your personal priorities?

Gail Pellerin: My family has been profoundly impacted by mental health issues. There is a public health crisis impacting our communities. I am an outspoken proponent for Suicide Awareness and Prevention and 988, the Mental Health Hotline. People need someone to call, someone to come, and someplace to go. There is a Mobile Mental Health Care Program in Oregon called Cahoots, where they provide responses 24/7 and 365. There is another at UCSC that is similar. There is a need to increase bed facilities, thereby increasing the number of people getting through the pipeline into mental health care. There is a huge shortage, although there is also more funding directed toward mental health, and I am hopeful about that. The 988 Lifeline set up a Commission to work on a 5-year strategic plan, and I want to be involved in that. There is also the Care Court idea, where there are people who deal with the small number of people who are most severely affected, and not safe, either to themselves or to others. Those cases may need involuntary commitment and treatment. There may be resistance at first, and then a change when they see the benefit that occurs.

Affordable housing and homelessness is another issue. Santa Cruz has the highest number of homeless per capita in the nation. We have a severe problem here. There is state funding available, yet we have seen little improvement. I think housing options are important: for example, tiny homes that are safe places for people to store their stuff and live. There would be community kitchens and restrooms. We need to get people off the streets. I am hopeful we can solve the homeless issue in my lifetime. Once people are in housing we can provide trauma care, workforce development, and work skills. The Homeless Garden Project in Santa Cruz is an excellent program that brings people in and gives them job skills, interviewing skills, job opportunities, and they work in the garden, develop products, or work in the retail store. They have an 85% graduation rate, and, in 6 to 9 months, people go on to get jobs and housing. It is important that unsheltered women get help and protection at night.

The environment is another issue. Wildfires, sea level rise, and coastal resilience are all important issues.

Kids are another priority. I am a huge supporter of Early Childhood Education.

Dawn Addis: The major areas that Assemblymember Addis sees as priorities are the environment and conservation, housing, family and children and agriculture.

She noted again the tie-in between housing and water use, noting that people want to live here, but we don't want to build too much because of water issues.

To help solve the housing needs, she supports the move that focuses on making it easier for community colleges to build housing for their students who are impacted, as going back to school can help those who are homeless. She recognized the three community colleges in her district: Cabrillo, Monterey Peninsula and Cuesta. She also noted

other housing needs, including the need for working people, like educators, to be able to find housing they can afford. There is also a need for emergency housing, as our exposure to fires and floods grows. She spoke with people who were pushed out of their houses by the January floods and were unable to find emergency housing they could afford.

Another environmental issue the Assemblymember is concerned about is offshore wind development. In order to do this properly, we must better understand the ocean, and find ways to mitigate the effects on the ocean of any development we do.

Helping the kelp forest remain healthy is extremely important as it is a bellwether for the ocean's health.

Local Issues. These were different in each of the conversations.

Gail Pellerin was asked "Does the state have any program, like "Build Back Better" that addresses infrastructure repair?"

Her Answer: The governor put a large amount of money in the last budget for infrastructure repair. I was in communication with the state every day during these last storms, arranging for recovery help. Especially hard hit was in the San Lorenzo Valley, on Harmon Gulch Road, where they are completely cut off and need water and propane supplies. We had county workers drive residents down to the recovery center and work with them to help them get the aid they need. Many received the first round of approval, which is \$2000.00; however, that is not enough money, so they need to appeal for more aid to rebuild their lives. I feel it would be more efficient to have one aid worker per applicant who knows how to navigate the programs, rather than having several different workers who homeowners must deal with. Getting the roads open is important right now, as well as getting the bus systems back, in order to get the kids back to school.

Final Comments: In order to reach us, we will have a district office in Santa Clara Valley in the Almaden Valley Area. We have a small office in Morgan Hill at the City Government Center.

Dawn Addis was asked several questions. The first was "How do we meet the affordable housing requirements of Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) with moratoriums due to lack of water supply?"

Her Answer: We need the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to communicate more with the water agencies to resolve competing priorities. Four elements are needed for housing to be built: land, money, political will, and the right regulatory environment. Currently, the lack of water has created a prohibitive regulatory environment, so using a variety of solutions to create more water is critical to solving the housing shortage.

The second question for Assemblymember Addis was “Do we need to increase the water supply due to possible reductions from the Colorado River?”

Her Answer: We need a variety of methods to increase our supply and that means more than just water reclamation. Increasing our capacity for water capture and storage is being discussed. This is complex and will require additional study.

The Assemblymember was then asked if she had thoughts on handling the mental health crisis.

Her Answer: We need to change our thinking about the unhoused. Data shows that people who are able to spend longer times in shelters and make more connections have a higher success rate in finding a stable living space. Many unhoused people are working, and they can't be expected to continue working and moving constantly, and still be successful in improving their conditions. We need longer term arrangements (60-90 days), and a better mental health nexus. We also need to make sure that people who are currently housed, like children and older women, can keep their housing. We need to keep people in their homes. Overall, we need to humanize our services and dignify our approach to homelessness and mental health.

She was also asked her feelings on Independent Redistricting Commissions for Counties.

Her Answer: There is a glaring need for these independent commissions, and there are legislators who want to work on this - as she does, especially as it affects San Luis Obispo County, where a lawsuit is pending over this issue. A follow up question was asked: If a settlement is proposed, does that set precedent for the state? Addis responded that there are legislators working on this, and they would need to review any new agreement.

Final comments: She appreciates League weighing in on issues as well as their emphasis on civil discourse and protecting democracy that helps create a political environment in which people want to be involved.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GETTING INVOLVED

Would you like to get more involved with the League? Now that you know that our focus over the 2023-24 year will be on coastal sustainability and climate change, voting rights and voting accessibility, mental health and transportation, would you like to help us set up programs around those topics? We can accomplish more with a team than with a single person working on these issues – and it's a great way to begin to get more involved with the League. So, let us know what interests you by contacting us at wvscc.org/contact-us. We look forward to working with you!

AND -TEN QUESTIONS FOR WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

March is women's History (Herstory?) Month, so here's ten questions from Time Magazine about women breaking boundaries. Good luck!

<https://www.playbuzz.com/TIME/how-well-do-you-know-womens-history>

