



# Santa Cruz VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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## Calendar

### LWV Board Meeting

Tuesday, October 11

10:00 a.m. - noon

To attend, contact President Barbara Lewis

[bobbi44@gmail.com](mailto:bobbi44@gmail.com)

### Creating Resilient Coastlines

Saturday, October 14

10:30 a.m. - noon

Capitola Library

2005 Wharf Road

Capitola, CA 95010

### **Have you renewed your membership?**

It's not too late. If you still need to renew, you can send a check to us at LWVSCC, PO Box 1745, Capitola, CA 95010, or renew online using PayPal at this link:

<https://my.lwv.org/california/santa-cruz-county/join>

Thanks for your continued support!

### **A Note on the Headers**

The font of the bold headers throughout this newsletter were recently created by Microsoft designer Steve Matteson, who named it after one of his favorite places – Aptos!

## **Creating Resilient Coastlines**

*Restoring living shorelines to protect our coast from climate hazards*

**Saturday, October 14, 10:30 AM to Noon**

**Capitola Library**

**2005 Wharf Road, Capitola, CA 95010**

Coastal scientists Ross Clark and Bill Henry will discuss local coastal climate hazards and pilot projects underway to protect our coasts from erosion and sea level rise.

The Monterey Bay Living Shorelines Program engages the community in projects to restore native habitat to create healthier, more resilient coastal ecosystems. They partner with California State Parks and neighborhood leaders to implement projects that enhance biodiversity and the long-term health of coastal habitats.

Ross Clark, Director of Central Coast Wetlands Group, has 25 years of experience in coastal adaptation research and planning, wetlands restoration, and sea level rise resiliency research.

Dr. Bill Henry, the founding director of Groundswell Coastal Ecology, is a local leader in ecological stewardship. He advises California State Parks, the County and City of Santa Cruz, and private landowners on ecological restoration and climate adaptation policy.

Attend this free, public program on Saturday, October 14, 10:30 AM to noon, at the Capitola Library, 2005 Wharf Road, to learn more about how our community can respond to the impact of climate change on our coastlines. Presented by the League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County; for more information visit our website at [lwvsc.org](http://lwvsc.org), email [league@lwvsc.org](mailto:league@lwvsc.org), or call 831-325-4140.

## President's Message

Thank you to all who have renewed your membership in the League of Women Voters as we continue to face the challenge of serious threats to our democracy. The League continues to be at the forefront of the fight to make our representative democracy work and ensure that every citizen has the opportunity to vote nationwide. I would also like to thank the many members who have added donations to their renewals, which will help support our programs and defray expenses. If you haven't already done so, please show your continuing support during these perilous times and renew your membership this coming month.

We are currently planning in person local programs for the 2023-2024 year on topics voted on at the 58th Annual Meeting of the League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County on June 10th. Topic 1, Coastal sustainability and plans for adapting to climate change, as was decided at our July 18 Program Calendar Planning meeting, is the opening program this fall. Program information for this first presentation is our opening article in this edition of the VOTER. We hope to see you there.

--Barbara Lewis, President LWVSCC

## Legislative Updates

Santa Cruz County is represented by one State Senator and three Assemblymembers. Since the current legislative session ended on September 14, we are looking at what each of our representatives has been working on over the past months.

## Senator John Laird – 17<sup>th</sup> Senate District

Senator Laird has 17 bills on the Governor's desk. He has procured over two million dollars for storm repair in Santa Cruz County, as well as an additional \$500,000 for the city of Capitola storm repair. As Chair of the Senate Budget Subcommittee on Education, he has also made great strides towards creating housing for college students at all levels of our public higher education system. A highlight of this effort is the funding arrangements that have been made to provide student housing, to be built on the Cabrillo College campus, that will support both Cabrillo College and UCSC students. A total of 624 beds will provide accommodation for 276 Cabrillo students and 248 UCSC students.

Senator Laird has also provided an important link to information about wildfire safety. If you need help with wildfire preparedness, please go to [Ready for Wildfire](#) to learn about all the resources available to harden your home and to create defensible space.

## Assemblymember Gail Pellerin -28<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

Gail Pellerin has been extremely busy in her first term representing Assembly District 28. Using the knowledge she gained in her many years as the Santa Cruz County Registrar of Voters, she has authored several bills to make the process of voting easier. AB 292 would update the format of No Party Preference ballots, so those voters will know which parties' candidates they can vote for. Another bill, AB 969, would disallow the process of hand counting ballots, to stop the movement in that direction by counties such as Shasta, that don't trust electronic voting systems. (Pellerin has noted that, to protect the data they hold, no voting systems are connected to the internet.) Gail's deep knowledge of voting systems has led to her being appointed as Chair of the Assembly Elections Committee. However, she hasn't focused only on election issues, she also introduced bills ranging from climate resiliency to health care.



## **Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas – 29<sup>th</sup> Assembly District**

These are some of the issues that the Speaker has been working on in the last session:

### **Increasing minimum wage for health care workers:**

This historic investment ensures they are fairly compensated and recognizes their enormous value, while also helping address hospital staffing shortages statewide. It also sets the highest state minimum wage for health care workers in the country, at \$25 an hour. By investing in essential workers, we improve the quality of care and bring stability to our health care system.

### **Supporting distressed hospitals:**

Two struggling hospitals in Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas' district will receive immediate, multimillion-dollar financial assistance from the state, the result of an urgent and coordinated effort to bolster distressed hospitals operations and improve regional health-care services.

On Thursday, Governor Gavin Newsom's office announced zero-interest loans for 17 state hospitals, including Hazel Hawkins Memorial Hospital in San Benito County and Watsonville Community Hospital in Santa Cruz County. As part of the Distressed Hospital Loan Program, the state allocated a total of \$300 million to California hospitals most in need.

Hazel Hawkins will receive \$10 million as part of the program, and Watsonville Community Hospital \$8.3 million.

## **Legislation to speed up vital flood control upgrades along the Pajaro River**

The levee system saw extensive damage during this past winter's storms, causing devastating flooding in the community of Pajaro. This amended legislation addresses an urgent need to accelerate the project's timeline.

"The historic storms and flooding this past March were devastating to the Pajaro community. These levees need to be upgraded now, urgently, and this allows us to perform critical work on a much faster timeline," Speaker Rivas said. "The extraordinary efforts of emergency response workers, community-based organizations, and residents in Pajaro earlier this year saved lives and avoided a worst-case scenario. We might not be as fortunate next time. So, it is vital that we expedite the Pajaro Levee upgrades to protect residents as quickly as possible."

Speaker Rivas, who represents the Pajaro and Salinas Valleys, amended Assembly Bill 876 to fast-track the completion of the upgrades and provide 100-year flood protection to communities along the river. Since the original construction of the levee system in 1949, Pajaro has experienced several major floods, including in the 1990s that killed multiple people and caused over \$100 million in damage. The community currently receives an eight-year level of flood protection, among the lowest in the state.

## **Assemblymember Dawn Addis – 30<sup>th</sup> Assembly District**

Dawn Addis has been extremely busy in her first term in the Assembly. She commented "I'm incredibly honored to work on behalf of the people of the Central Coast to pass these important measures," Addis said. "This legislation will help the most vulnerable among us – including children and seniors. While I'm proud that we've made progress this year, there's more we must and will do to continue to improve our Central Coast communities."

She has been busy - this is a listing of her bills that have reached the Governor's desk, including one that has been signed into law and ties into John Laird's support of student housing.

[AB 452: Justice for Survivors of Child Sex Abuse](#) – Removes barriers that prevent minors who have experienced sexual abuse from seeking justice against their abusers and the institutions that concealed or ignored their claims.

[AB 839: Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly](#) – Expands funding eligibility for Residential Care Facilities to reduce borrowing costs and support affordable, senior living communities.

[AB 318: Mobilehomes Residency Law Protection Program](#) – Extends the much-needed Mobilehome Residency Law Protection Program, thereby allowing a vulnerable and often ignored population of Californians their right to seek justice.

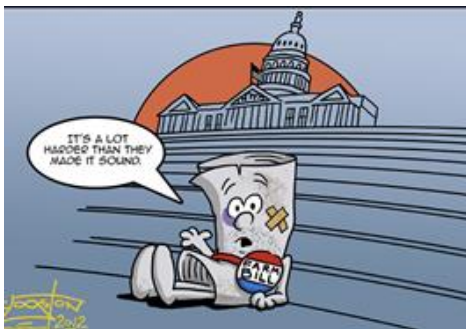
[AB 370: Biliteracy Advancement Act](#) – Allows flexibility for English learners to demonstrate their multi-lingual competency when applying for the State Seal of Biliteracy.

[AB 1123: Paid Parental Leave Act](#) – Enables CSU employees to take an academic term of paid parental/family leave.

[AB 840: CSU Tied-House Exemption Program](#) – Widens sponsorship opportunities for small businesses and CSU campuses (including those at Cal Poly and CSUMB) which will help support various campus programs.

In July, Governor Newsom signed Addis' [AB 358, which streamlines the approval of new community college student housing by exempting architectural plans from specified state approvals](#)

We should be very pleased with the hard work our elected representatives have put in on our behalf.



## LWVC Focuses on Redistricting

The State League is supporting two bills that would help ensure fair redistricting at all levels throughout the state. AB 1248 would require cities and counties with more than 300,000 people and educational districts with more than 500,000 people to adopt the same, proven independent redistricting commission that we use on the statewide level.

And even in places that wouldn't be required to have independent redistricting commissions – we can make sure the process is still fair and transparent via AB 764, which prohibits incumbency-protection gerrymandering statewide and requires more public participation in the process.

Both bills have passed the Legislature and are on the Governor's desk.

## A Perspective on Redistricting from the National League

LWV Senior Director of Mission Impact, Jeanette Senecal, stressed the importance of having public input:

**“Redistricting impacts every issue we care about. It impacts our lives in every way.”**

In her remarks, she strongly emphasized that people should identify who is leading redistricting in their state. She encourages everyone to identify their community's needs and find out how they can have a voice in the redistricting process in their state. Having citizen input in the map drawing process is the way to ensure that fair and equitable maps are drawn.

Even in states where citizens are involved in the map drawing process, it's crucial to set ethical standards to eliminate the possibility of manipulating the redistricting process for private or political gains. To do this, states must create ethical rules that include transparency, accountability, and a standard of conduct for commissioners and politicians. In addition, states must hold public hearings and forums where the public has an opportunity to give input on the process.