



Santa Cruz VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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CALENDAR

Local Program Planning

Tuesday, March 4, 2025

1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

At the home of Sandra Warren

150 Scenic Street, Santa Cruz

Please let Sandra know if you are planning on attending. You can reach her by email at sandra333warren@gmail.com

Pam Newbury pointed out that Criminal Justice Reform as it affects our youth might be a good topic for local programming:

In June 2023, California closed its youth detention centers and sent young people back to their counties. Let's connect with County Supervisors to shine a light on the experience of our youth under the care of Probation. How well are diversion programs working? Are cases being adjudicated in a timely fashion so that the number of youth awaiting hearings is kept to a minimum. Does your county ensure that facilities are safe? What programming is offered to youth in detention to continue their education and to provide counseling for successful reentry into their communities?

What do you think? Join us on March 4th and help us decide.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Thank you to Sandy Warren for hosting our State Program Planning discussion on January 28, which provided an opportunity to socialize and make recommendations for what areas the California League of Women Voters should emphasize when doing legislative lobbying and programs as well as what will interest and engage our local members. Lydia Parker took notes and will be sending our recommendations with names of volunteers willing to work in these areas to LWVC by

February 24. The topic of housing was discussed as of local and state interest, with Carolyn Lewis suggesting outreach in this VOTER to see if there are any members who would like to volunteer to work on setting up programs about housing or be listed as a local contact for the state if this becomes an area of emphasis. If interested, please email league@lwvsc.org.

Our next meeting at Sandy's will be Local Program Planning on March 4 from 1-3 p.m. We will be recommending programs for the coming year and taking suggestions of speakers and locations to meet. If unable to attend and you want to share your ideas, please let our hostess or a board member who will be attending know what you want communicated.

Programs should be ones of interest both to our members and the community at large.

We have been doing fascinating legislative interviews in January and February, with notes to appear in this and future issues of the VOTER following review by participants and approval by the legislator. Local representatives who have been or will be interviewed this season are: Assemblymembers Dawn Addis, Gail Pellerin, Robert Rivas and State Senator John Laird. We are delighted that both Assemblymember Gail Pellerin and Senator John Laird are members of the League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County and that they each gave us a full hour for the interviews and covered so much in that time.

----Barbara Lewis, President, LWVSCC

LWV IMPLEMENTS NEW NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP SYSTEM

This month the League of Women Voters has transitioned to a unified membership and dues system for all Leagues across the US. Soon, all members will receive an email from the national League (membership@lwv.org) inviting them to activate their account in the new membership portal website. This process takes only a few minutes (see a video about how to access the new membership portal:

[here LWV: Join/Renew Your Membership on Vimeo](#)).

Members can use the portal to pay dues, update their information, access Vote411, and more.

Note that this is not a renewal request; currently, we are only asking members to activate their account and check to be sure their contact information is correct. When your renewal anniversary date is near, you will receive a notice reminding you to renew your membership. All you need to know now is to expect an email from the League with your link to the portal, but if you want to know more details about how the League is transforming its membership system, read further.

Under the new system there is no longer a fixed dues amount set by individual Leagues. Dues are now on a sliding scale; the recommended dues rate for all Leagues across the country is \$75, but a member can choose to pay any amount higher than that, or any amount lower to a minimum of \$20. A member may join or renew on behalf of another member (either in the same household or not); whatever dues amount is selected for the first member will be applied to the second (so if the first member joins at the \$75 rate, the total amount for two members would be \$150). Note that each member must have their own unique email

address. (Only one email address in your household? Contact us to learn about a workaround for this.)

Dues money received will be distributed among the three League levels as follows: national: 33%; state: 47%; and local: 20%. This percentage split was chosen because it's the one that benefits the highest number of Leagues—approximately 75% of Leagues (including ours) stand to come out ahead in terms of member dues relative to the amount they would have kept under the old model.

Members may also make a separate (non-tax-deductible) donation to LWVSCC when they renew. (For information about making a tax-deductible donation, visit the [donation page](#) of our website).

This new process is expected to increase League membership for several reasons. First, the sliding-scale dues model makes League membership affordable for all. Second, members may opt into annual auto-renewal, making it easy to maintain their membership with the League long-term. Also, the unified join form makes it simple to promote joining more widely across all League sites, including on lwv.org and through national membership drives.

In order to streamline the membership process, we encourage members to renew online. The secure online portal accepts payment by credit card or from your US bank account (similar to using a check; learn more about this process on this [video](https://vimeo.com/1046474514/47a1b95c59?share=copy) <https://vimeo.com/1046474514/47a1b95c59?share=copy>). Using a bank transfer helps the League, as the fees are about half that incurred through a credit card payment. Members who still wish to pay offline by check should contact us for information about how to do so.

You can find more information about the new membership system and dues structure on our local League website at lwvsc.org/join. If you have any questions or need help accessing the membership portal, please contact us by email at membership@lwvsc.org.

Legislative Interview with Assemblymember Gail Pellerin 28th District Representative

This meeting was held on January 24, 2025. Attending from Gail Pellerin's office, along with the Assemblymember, was her field representative, Lisette Jones. Representatives from our League included Barbara Lewis, Pam Newbury, Lydia Nogales-Parker and Mindy Ryan. Assembly District 28 includes the northern portion of Santa Cruz County and extends eastward into San Jose and Morgan Hill.

Question #1: Mindy Ryan

What major issues do you think the Legislature must deal with in 2025?

Assemblymember Pellerin emphasized the legislature’s immediate focus with special legislative sessions addressing wildfire impacts, insurance reforms, and disaster relief funding.

There continues to be a focus on civil rights, reproductive freedoms, immigrant families, voting rights, and LGBTQ rights in response to federal developments.

Recent emergency funding has seen the Legislature approve \$2.5 billion in immediate emergency response for debris removal, hazard mitigation, air and water testing, and rebuilding.

Question #2: Pam Newbury

What are your personal legislative priorities?

Assemblymember Pellerin has been working on coastal resilience initiatives, environmental protections, and continuing housing efforts. She mentioned we are close to achieving the “30x30” goal of protecting 30% of California’s land and coastal waters by 2030.

Assemblymember Pellerin has concerns over lack of childcare, insufficient wages for childcare workers, as well as infrastructure improvements in schools.

Question #3: Lydia Parker

Is there any plan to have potential signage or official acknowledgement of Indigenous lands in parks, at trailheads and historical markers in California?

In 2019, the Governor issued an executive order apologizing to Native American tribes for historical injustices and formed a Truth and Healing Council. Over \$100 million has been allocated to tribal projects, returning ancestral lands where possible.

She mentioned co-stewardship efforts between tribes and state parks to manage forests and land for wildfire resilience and cultural preservation.

Question #4: Barbara Lewis

Considering the mandates for new construction in the county, there are concerns with water usage and traffic congestion. Would you please comment on this problem?

Assemblymember Pellerin believes that Santa Cruz’s limited geography, high traffic congestion, and water concerns are key challenges. The Bus-on-shoulder project on Highway 1 aims to relieve congestion. Expansions of the North Coast Rail Trail and Soquel Drive bike/pedestrian lanes are ongoing.

Santa Cruz sources of water from Loch Lomond Reservoir, the San Lorenzo River, and other surface/groundwater sites are vulnerable to drought and climate variability. Seawater intrusion due to overdrawn aquifers is a concern. The Soquel Pure Water Project recycles wastewater into potable water via micro filtration, RO, and UV/hydrogen peroxide, following models like Orange County’s.

Question #5: Pam Newbury

In light of the massive fires in Southern California, and Santa Cruz County’s experience with catastrophic fires, the availability of homeowners’ insurance is top in the minds of residents. Would you give us an update on how the legislature is addressing this problem?

There is concern that the CZU fire recovery remains ongoing with many homes not rebuilt years later.

Current extreme weather events (tornado in Scotts Valley, wharf damage, Moss Landing battery facility fire) illustrate the growing impact of climate change on local infrastructure. The Moss Landing Battery Storage Fire triggered an investigation into safety and environmental concerns; the Assemblymember is questioning the suitability of placing large battery storage sites near marine sanctuaries or prime agricultural land.

Assemblymember Pellerin supports local fire departments and has seen investments in CAL FIRE staffing increased over recent years. The state has doubled the CAL FIRE workforce over the past years, with additional funding for climate and fire protection. Still, local fire brigades, especially in places like Bonny Doon, face coordination challenges with CAL FIRE.

Question #6: Barbara Lewis

What are state plans to address the growing fiscal challenges for public schools? Teachers' salaries are not keeping pace with the cost of living in Santa Cruz County, which is among the highest in the country.

Teachers' salaries are negotiated district by district, but state funds flow via Prop 98. AB65 (Aguiar-Curry) proposes paid leave and protections for school employees for up to 14 weeks for pregnancy/childbirth and recovery. It addresses previously inadequate maternity policies for educators. The Speaker's emphasis on affordability suggests ongoing legislative interest in living wages for teachers and cost-of-living measures.

Final Remarks From Assemblymember Pellerin

Recent federal actions raise fears about increased ICE raids and potential mistaken detentions.

There was discussion of "Know Your Rights" red card, passports, passport cards for US born immigrant families to ensure they have documentation if parents face deportation. Ongoing involvement of local groups (e.g. Community Action Board) is important, focusing on legal resources and support services for undocumented or mixed-status families.

Participants thanked Assemblymember Gail Pellerin for the comprehensive update and insights on legislative priorities. The League of Women Voters members expressed continued interest in monitoring and supporting policies around climate resilience, insurance availability, affordable housing, indigenous acknowledgement, education, childcare, and immigration rights.

The meeting was adjourned with agreement to maintain open lines of communication and schedule future town halls/forums as legislation progresses.

---Thanks to League Secretary Lydia Parker for her excellent notes

Legislative Interview with Assemblymember Dawn Addis 30th District Representative

This meeting was held on January 14, 2025. It was run by the San Luis Obispo League. Also attending were members from the Monterey County League, as well as our Santa Cruz County League. Assembly District 30 circles the Monterey Bay from Santa Cruz south and extends southeast through Monterey and much of San Luis Obispo County. Dawn Addis answered all the questions herself, without the help of her aides.

Question 1: What major issues do you think the legislature must deal with in 2025?

The assemblymember emphasized emergency preparedness – including insurance, healthcare, and making sure to get disaster relief dollars into the hands of people that need it -- especially after the Los Angeles wildfires. The Central Coast also has experienced numerous emergencies and disasters. The Assemblymember noted that Santa Cruz still has not received the CZU Lightning Complex fire relief money and the promised flood relief funds after the 2023 atmospheric rivers. She commented that disasters, when they happen, not only result in people losing their homes, but their jobs as well. On December 2, a special legislative session began to discuss how to help Californians with issues such as immigration and the LA Fires. A lot of the legislature's work will be reacting to the Trump administration, but at this time they do not know how fire relief and immigration will be affected.

She noted that the health budget is \$100 billion, which needs to be reviewed and will play a very important role. The Assemblymember emphasized that the legislature has done a lot for healthcare. The state will be facing potential rollbacks on federal subsidies for the Affordable Care Act and Medicare. She stated the need to focus on reproductive, gender affirming and mental health care. Unhoused populations and children are very vulnerable, especially children suffering trauma from loss of schooling from COVID and now from the LA fires, which must be addressed.

Question 2: What are your Personal Legislative Priorities?

Assemblymember Addis's first comments in the interview noted that the top priority on people's minds is disaster preparedness, so it is no surprise that some schedules are delayed. Her legislative package is in process but not yet completed. She emphasized that her focus is on the Central Coast with similar issues faced by all counties along the coast. She is the co-chair of the Central Coast Legislative Caucus that includes both assemblymembers and state senators, along with newly

appointed co-chair Assemblymember Gregg Hart, whose district spans Santa Barbara and some of southern San Luis Obispo County. Addis

has experience with emergency management from the atmospheric rivers early in her tenure; she co-sponsored a bill from Senator Laird's office to require emergency response plans for large energy installations like the Vistra battery project in Morro Bay.

She emphasized the past session's coastal and preservation efforts, such as \$5 million for Wild Cherry Canyon near the Diablo Canyon reactor; AB 3233, which gives local jurisdictions choice on oil and gas development; and support for the SLO County Citizens Redistricting Commission - legislation sponsored by Senator Laird. She pledged to continue this kind of work going forward.

Question 3: Thank you for your support for the Elkhorn Sea Level Rise Resiliency Project to help address sea level rise along the Highway 1 corridor. Sea level rise is a concern for all three of the counties in your district. What actions do you envision the state can take this legislative session and in the coming years to address the situation?

The Assemblymember indicated this issue has great importance to her. Last year she was part of the working group that created the \$10 billion climate bond and she made sure Central Coast agencies could apply, ensuring geographic equity. Governor Newsom proposed using some of these dollars for the response to the Southern California fires. She noted that we need accountability for this money, and need to know that it is unduplicated dollars, i.e. the original money plus the climate bond.

She is in constant contact with three county health departments in her district to understand the effects from climate change, including the impacts to health from sea level rise. She also wants to avoid cuts to existing sea level adaptation programs and has a good view of this via her service on the

Ocean Protection Council (OPC), which focuses on ocean health and climate resilience. She has been appointed to the ex officio position on the OPC.

Question 4: We appreciate your bill, AB 2173, replacing the term 'emotional disturbance' with 'emotional disability' this year. As a former educator, do you have future bills that you plan to introduce in the arena of education?

Assemblymember Addis will be looking for additional legislation on special education and, as an educator, has a major concern in this area. She is likely to be on the Education Committee (final assignments have not yet been made) and is the Chair of the Select Committee on Serving Students with Disabilities. She noted that federal policy changes may be coming that will require responses from the State; notably, the incoming administration has considered the idea of abolishing the Federal Department of Education. She added that there is some good news on the state budget: education spending is fully funded in current drafts. She noted that this news should be taken with some caution: the wildfires in LA have triggered deferrals in paying taxes for some residents, which may cause lower than anticipated revenue. A budget revision is possible in May.

Question 5: Many counties are concerned that Proposition 1 funding guidelines will reduce resources for existing county-level mental and behavioral health policies that work. Would you consider budgeting more for county discretionary spending for mental/behavioral health programs or reallocating the Prop 1 funding to increase support for county discretionary spending?

Assemblymember Addis expressed that she was glad this question was asked. The health budget is \$100 billion and has a dozen programs. She just had her first meeting with a health budget staffer to begin to understand and analyze these programs to get the lay of the land. She wants to review the programs to understand if they are delivering or not. She is looking for inefficiencies in the system and does not want to create winners or losers. She indicated that the legislature must be timely and be accountable. The goal is to get people the services that they need and deserve.

Assemblymember Addis was prepared, to the point, and candid. The interview was completed in 20 minutes.

NOTE: Interviews with State Senator John Laird and Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas will be published in upcoming issues of the VOTER.



Current Work Being Undertaken by the LWVUS

In these difficult times under the current Federal administration, the League is not sitting back. Here are some of the projects the League is currently working on:

Defending Democracy

Over our 105-year history, the League has addressed many issues that have faced us or continue to face us. However, the basic issue of defending democracy cannot be ignored or assumed to be safe without our continued watchfulness. The recent election and its continued aftermath have shown us that we need to keep stepping forward to save our democracy.

One of Benjamin Franklin's memorable quotes is: "Democracy is two wolves and a lamb voting on what to have for lunch. Liberty is a well-armed lamb contesting the vote." We need to be those well-armed lambs.

The LWVUS has begun a **Women Defending Democracy** campaign centered around five goals:

- Provide Democracy Education and Election Administration Support
- Restore and Defend Voting Rights Protection
- Abolish the Electoral College
- Protect Democracy Organizations and Institutions
- Fight for Reproductive Freedoms

If you are interested in joining this fight, you can [join this mailing list](#)

How the League is Defending Immigrants in the US

Legal Advocacy

We support federal immigration laws that provide efficient, expeditious systems for immigrants to enter the United States.

Congress must take immediate action to pass common-sense, fair immigration policies that end the crisis at our border, stop the separation of families, and provide a path to citizenship.

Supporting a Path to Citizenship

Diverse voices enhance our democracy. The League believes that a path to citizenship, or provisions for unauthorized immigrants already living in the US to earn legal status, will strengthen our nation.

We have lobbied both the [House](#) and [Senate](#) for a path to citizenship. We've also lobbied to support the *DREAM Act*, critical legislation enabling immigrant youth to become fully productive members of American society.

Helping New Americans Become Active Participants in Our Democracy

Voter education and voter registration are the foundation of the League's work.

The strongest democracy is one in which the voices of all participants are heard. As such, the League is committed to helping new citizens become active in American political life. We do this by providing civic education and registering tens of thousands of new voters at naturalization ceremonies in communities nationwide.

[LWVUS Joins Letter Urging Congress to Oppose Denial of Federal Funding to Sanctuary Cities](#)

The League joined a letter urging Congress to oppose a bill that would block sanctuary jurisdictions from receiving federal funds that benefit undocumented immigrants through food, shelter, health care, legal services, and transportation.

Letter to the US Congress

On the 105th anniversary of our founding, the League sent a letter to all members of congress, asking them to defend our democracy in these harrowing times. You can read the text of the letter at this link:

<https://lwvc.org/lwv-urges-congress-to-exercise-its-authority/>