



Santa Cruz VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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Emergency Fundraiser For Human Trafficking Survivors

Sponsor: Rising Worldwide
Rio Theatre
Friday, March 28, 2025
7:30 – 9:30 p.m.
Tickets are \$35 at risingworldwide.org

The event includes a survivor-curated art exhibit, and performance art created by anti-trafficking movement leaders that transmutes trauma into triumph and tangible action. They have received confirmation that an Emmy award winning artist will also be performing. All proceeds support Rising Worldwide’s anti-trafficking programs including our Urgent Needs Fund.

Rising Worldwide has stood by survivors with unwavering commitment, but right now feels more urgent than ever. One call they received was from a transgender survivor who was illegally detained at an airport. They acted quickly, alerting the media so their story would be heard. Another call came from an immigrant survivor who was detained by ICE while simply trying to get groceries from a food pantry—her government consulting contracts had been suspended, leaving her without support.

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

This month's VOTER features a report on the outstanding legislative interviews that took place with State Senator John Laird and Assemblymember Robert Rivas, with considerable time and effort spent on planning and thought taking place on what local questions to ask, who would ask them, followed by proofreading and review afterwards. Since all Leagues in their districts were represented, this was a good chance to meet members from other areas. I was amazed by how much content could occur in a limited time and I encourage you to read the interview notes, which have been approved for publication. Thank you to Marilyn Radisch and Lydia Parker for their participation and to Tama Olver of the Monterey County League of Women Voters for providing excellent coordination.

I would also like to thank Sandra Warren for hosting our Local Program Planning meeting on March 4 and opening her home to us so many times over the years. I appreciate the many ideas contributed by those who attended, including several new members, and the work of Pam Newbury in helping with the ideas and wording for 2024-2025 local program to be voted on by our members at the upcoming Annual Meeting. Kit Hein, who was unable to join that day, emailed one of the suggested programs, which may be co-sponsored with the American Association of University Women. At our March 12 Board of Directors meeting the proposed program was approved with no changes for inclusion in the Annual Meeting Kit and a vote by the members.

We have been very fortunate to have Pam Newbury's help with updating our website, which now includes revision of our local bylaws to reflect changes in the way the League of Women Voters is handling membership and bringing our bylaws up to date. Pam has spent a considerable amount of time and effort to make information easily accessible, including eliminating the Members Only section and need for a password to view minutes and other items of interest. To view, simply go to our website at:

my.lwv.org/california/santa-cruz-county/our-local-league

You can click on Bylaws of the League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County to learn how our group will be operating now and in the future. Much of my time and effort this past year has been spent on this bylaws update and working with representatives from the

California League. Special thanks go to Pam Newbury, Jan Karwin, Lydia Parker, and Geri McGillicuddy for helping with this review. Our Local League on the website also includes our Nonpartisan Policy and links to other Leagues. Another very useful feature of the website is the Contact Your Officials section. Exploring our local website is highly recommended as a way to learn about our group and what we do.

---Barbara Lewis, President LWVSCC

LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEW With State Senator John Laird



Senator Laird represents the 17th State Senate District, which includes the entirety of Santa Cruz, San Benito and Monterey Counties, as well as the majority of San Luis Obispo

County. This interview was hosted by Tama Olver of the Monterey County League and included members of Leagues of the other counties in Laird's district.

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

Federal Funding – what impacts changes in federal funding will have.

The Senator attended a retreat of Democratic Senators to discuss budget issues and concerns of continued federal funding for education, environmental and social issues

Education funding is a priority. He is deeply concerned about the Governor's proposed 8% cut to the UC and California State

University systems. Sen Laird is working to reverse this and to ensure these college systems receive the annual 5% increase per the compacts in place.

Fire Insurance -The Senator is on a working group for this issue. The question now is how the LA fires will impact the insurance offerings in California

Cap and Trade – He is on a workgroup to consider renewing AB 32 early so there is stability in the system.

- The group will discuss where the revenue earned from Cap and Trade will be spent
- Also wants to look at how to sell this program to the public – educate the public on the benefits they receive from this program
- Follow up question about the dividend – there is a possibility the working group will discuss how this dividend could go back to consumers.

Local Issues – Senator Laird is working on the following local issues:

- Working to obtain grant funding to fix a dam in south Monterey County
- Working on the Diablo Canyon deal related to surrounding land
- Addressing drinking water issues in San Lucas
- Addressing homelessness in Santa Cruz County and ensuring continuation of the City of Santa Cruz homeless program

Question 2: What are your personal legislative priorities?

(These issues are in addition to the local issues mentioned in response to Question #1.)

- He has introduced a bill focused on gift cards and consumer rights to access money up to a certain amount. It's a consumer protection issue.
- There is an existing bill on pain and suffering benefits; he is introducing a bill to remove the sunset.
- He took what they learned and practiced during the COVID period and codified them by way of introducing the Bagley-Keene Open Meetings Act, which is a California law that covers all state boards and commissions, requiring that these bodies publicly notice their meetings, prepare agendas, accept

public testimony and conduct their meetings in public unless specifically authorized by the Act.

- Related to the battery storage fire issue: back in 2023 he introduced a bill requiring safety plans that it now appears Moss Landing didn't adhere to. There aren't any standards for lithium batteries. We need safety standards that move where the batteries move (from plants to cars).
- He is working with a couple of stakeholders in implementing the climate bond that passed in November. He wants to focus on the San Andreas corridor and wildlife for this climate bond money. He is also looking to see if the first piece of that money is ready. He is being appointed to the Wildlife Conservation Board.
- In that bond there is money for wildfire resilience. He wants to make sure it gets to local people and local areas. These are some of the top items that come to mind.
- He has many committee assignments, including Judiciary, Natural Resources, Labor, Education, Rules, Joint Audit, Joint Rules, Fire Insurance, Cap & Trade, and Local Government. These committee assignments keep many issues in his line of sight. For example, the Rules Committee controls appointments, like Trustees for the university system. He makes it a point to meet with people individually, which helps place accountability.

Question 3: Where do you see the future of battery storage for green energy in

California, given recent events? Where do you see the future of wind energy headed?

The Moss Landing fire was catastrophic and hard for those impacted.

However, battery storage plays a monumental role in the reliability of energy when the sun is not shining, and the wind is not blowing. It plays a critical role in CA's green energy future.

Battery storage technology has improved and grown – the technology at Moss Landing is old. The newer technology houses batteries in individual containers that are enclosed. If a fire breaks out in one, it doesn't spread to the other battery units – it will just burn out. This means a significant reduction in catastrophic fires. An important policy issue is how do we improve, inspect and phase out old technology that is less safe. We need to study what happened at Moss Landing. The public needs to know what happened.

AB 303 – the bill that was introduced that requires oil setbacks, is misleading. It's like comparing apples to oranges. This bill may change significantly during the legislative process. It is not a good policy to change the entire permitting process due to what happened with one project.

Laird doesn't support individual bills to address the issues. We need to look at this in the aggregate. That said, he is sympathetic to Dawn Addis's concerns. (Addis introduced AB 303.)

The Senator supports wind energy. Yes there are issues to address, such as the impact on wildlife. Also, how to have enough transmission to carry the energy to where it is needed. The transmission lines from Diablo Canyon were going to be used to transmit wind energy produced but these won't be available now because Diablo is continuing to operate. So, when will the wind energy come online? The Federal Ban on wind energy hasn't impacted existing leases, yet.

Question 4: How will California and your district in particular respond to President Trump's position that migrants can be arrested in schools?

It's a bad idea and he doesn't support it. Schools need to be a safe place for learning, and this is out of line. There are so many complexities to the issues including families with mixed immigration status. When he was mayor, INS (now known as ICE) deported

parents, and kids were left with nowhere to go. We have to address this in a more human and compassionate way.

Question 5: Can or will the State do anything to help counties in California that are designated to be “rural” with respect to Medicare and Medicaid provider reimbursement? Will the state provide help for any county regarding the loss of health professionals as a result of federal policy?

Yes, at the state level we can advocate for this change – Area 97 (north Santa Cruz County) was changed to a higher level due to state advocacy. Santa Cruz county is still bifurcated, however.

Connected to this issue, the most underfunded UC campuses are due to these campuses not having a law school and medical school. The Chancellor of UCSC plans to work on adding a Med School program. Students would spend their first two years at UC Davis and then complete their program at UCSC.

His focus is on Santa Cruz right now, but it is a long term effort (to increase the number of medical providers). The issue is that there is a fixed pot of money, so increasing reimbursement levels for one jurisdiction means funds are taken from another.

We will need to work with Carbajal and Panetta to make a change to classification levels. The LWV needs to help make this happen.

LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEW With Assemblymember

Robert Rivas



Assemblymember Robert Rivas, who is currently also Speaker of the Assembly, represents Assembly District 29, which includes much of Santa Cruz County, along with parts of Monterey and Santa Clara Counties. This interview was held on February 21, 2025.

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

I appreciate the opportunity to have this conversation in our region. This is the start of my 4th term. It's an intense job as the Speaker, with varying dynamics and a fast pace. There are a lot of high stakes, depending on which legislator I am speaking with. We must find solutions to common problems. We've come out of a very difficult November election. The economy was top of mind for people. The way people get information is something I am struggling with. There is much disinformation. The Biden administration accomplishments should have been better celebrated. The infrastructure package under Biden was historic. We never heard about that. We heard about failure. We heard about marginalized issues that Republicans used and captivated audiences' attention. We need to make progress in key areas. Our mission and expectation are very clear. We have to do a better job on issues that residents care about. We have to prove to Californians that we are making their lives better. Our focus needs to be on that. Issues such as the high cost of living in this state. This is not only a low income issue, but also an issue that affects all California residents.

We had the LA fires. Such devastating impact. The White House has politicized this horrific disaster with misinformation and threats. So many distractions such as water not going to fire hydrants. I was a firefighter and I recognize the challenges faced.

Our priorities shift to the cost of living, recovery of LA and mitigating the rapid destruction of our Federal government that is undoing the progress we've made over decades. It's startling and scary. We are working with the state senate and governor to fight back against unconstitutional actions.

Question 2: What are your personal legislative priorities?

Great question. I represent Assembly District 29, it's a strong agricultural district and my home. There are many negative impacts such as lack of housing, affordable health care, as this area has a high percentage of undocumented residents.

I am honored to serve as Speaker. I am the first speaker from the Central Coast since the founding of our state. I want to elevate issues that have gone unnoticed and haven't been prioritized before. For example: flooding of the Pajaro Valley and displacement of ag workers. We were able to fully fund long overdue repairs that need to occur on that levee system. This region has been overlooked. I am very proud to lift up our local concerns. My leadership style is about engagement and local issues. I have been very busy traveling the state meaning time away from home and family. I want to understand all the issues.

The Coachella Valley is overlooked, so they appreciate it when I visit there. I want to improve processes in the State Assembly. And address accountability - ensuring the laws that have been on the books for years are still working, as well as ensuring tax dollars are going for their intended purpose. A housing bill passed a couple of years ago about this very issue and it's time to assess the results. Is that bill still working?

I will continue to address basic issues: housing, affordable access to health care and addressing situations revolving around the bankruptcy of local hospitals. This results in a lack of access to care, even if people have health insurance, if there is no health care...people must have both.

Climate change is important. My 15 years as an elected official has allowed me to see the intersection of climate change and the impacts on community, including our ag community.

We need to build resilient communities. Have an ability to adapt and ensure that communities are resilient. For example: home hardening techniques on homes that escaped damage from the LA fire.

Finally, representing such a unique region for space and natural resources. We must protect resources from the Trump administration. I am working closely with the Attorney General to protect our state. The AG is very good at partnering with other states to overturn or pause to understand the impact of White House executive orders.

Question 3: How does the Assembly intend to defend California's values and priorities?

Answers to this question are included in the other answers that Speaker Rivas has given.

Question 4: What can the Assembly do to defend the civil rights of our labor force?

No state has done more for workers/working families than California. Many of the laws are now under a Federal microscope. DEIA provisions in bills are being cancelled. When we started the year, the Governor called a session. We put \$25 million toward providing resources to the Attorney General, and he and his team are working around the clock to challenge orders from the Trump administration to ensure that protections that were put in place, stay in place. I am a first generation Californian, the issue of undocumented people is close to me. Criminals do need to be held accountable and deported, but at the same time, most immigrants are playing by the rules. They earn a living and do their best in overcrowded housing. All the protections that have been placed for these people to have access to healthcare is under threat - MediCal program threats. I have hope for Attorney General Bonta and his staff and their ability to fight back.

How can we support you?

Your activism is very much appreciated. Vocalize concerns. Mobilize and lift up issues to local elected officials. Talk to your neighbors. Try to be as visible as possible. We are consuming news from social media and there is much disinformation. It's challenging to focus on issues that are of importance. Unlike in 2016, the national Democrats are caught off guard and not prepared for this moment. The Trump agenda was well planned and executed well. There is lots of apathy. Many are turned off. This is not a SNL skit. THIS IS REAL. There is an

attempt to destroy. THIS IS NOT A JOKE. In our 270+ year history we've not seen this. Count on us to fight for our values for California.



MEMORIAL

Sue Becker

Sue Becker, who passed away in December of 2024, was a very active volunteer in our League of Women Voters since joining the League in 2011. She was a presenter for the pros/cons on state ballot measures before elections and then joined the Board in 2014. We were co-chairs of Voter Services together for six years until 2020. Sue was a stalwart worker at all of the events leading up to elections. We worked as a team on voter education, voter registration, candidate forums and presentations on state ballot measures. She was also a past president of LWVC.

Sue believed in the League's mission to educate voters to make informed decisions in elections and was committed to our democratic process. Thank you, Sue, for being such an inspiration to all of us.

--- Thanks to Dorothy Fry for this memorial

DEI IN WWII

It's hard these days to avoid talking about DEI – after all, the feds started it, by trying to make it go away. But they can't. We aren't going to forget WWII, so we'll remember the 442nd Infantry Regiment, made up of Japanese Americans, many of whom had relatives interned back home while they fought for our country. This regiment is often called the "Go for Broke" regiment because of their bravery. Members of the 442nd earned 21 Medals of Honor, 4000

Purple Hearts and 4000 Bronze Stars as they fought the Nazis and helped liberate France and Italy – as well as a Dachau satellite concentration camp.

We also aren't going to forget the Tuskegee Airmen. This group of black flyers, who were trained at what is now Tuskegee University, earned three Distinguished Unit Citations. They were praised for their excellent combat fighting while protecting American bombers from enemy fighters. And when they returned home, they had to live under Jim Crow laws.

And then there were the Navajo code talkers, who helped transmit messages for Marines during WWII – and they were Navajo codes because we also used code talkers in WWI. In that war we used the Choctaw language to create codes the Germans couldn't crack. So, after WWI, both the Germans and the Japanese sent students to study the Choctaw language. Since we could no longer trust the Choctaw language to protect our communications, in WWII we switched to using the Navajo language to transmit messages the Japanese couldn't translate.

They took down Jackie Robinson's picture – he also served in WWII. When they put it back, they said "we didn't put it back because he's black." Wasn't it originally put there because Jackie Robinson served in WWII, as well as being a great baseball player?

And what about women? 350,000 women served in the US Armed Forces during WWII. One well-known example, the 6888th Battalion – consisting of almost all black women - was the one that found a way to get mail to soldiers fighting in Europe. But they weren't the only ones. There were the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Services), the WACs (Women's Army Corps), and the WASPs (Women's Airforce Service Pilots.) And that doesn't include those women, like Rosie the Riveter, who stayed home to work in the factories turning out military equipment.

They took down the picture of the flag raising on Iwo Jima because one soldier was Native American. Weren't the Native Americans here before any white people?

Would we have won the war without these people? Good question. The Enola Gay had a lot to do with our success as well – and she was also removed from the database. (Can you call an airplane 'she'?)

And then the feds started in on Vietnam by removing information on the late US Army General, Charles Rogers, who received the Medal of Honor from President Nixon for "actions that took place near the Cambodian Border on November 1, 1968", (the bloodiest year of that war). The son of a coal miner, General Rogers was the highest ranking black man to have received the award from Nixon.

These stories were a few of the 26,000 citations removed from the Pentagon's database by people working for the federal government who are not very smart – and maybe not very brave. Luckily, they have been returned to their proper places because people who care about our history complained. But how many others of the 26,000 have not been returned?

DEI – maybe it also stands for Determination, Excellence, Integrity.

LWVC is Confronting Homelessness

Everyone deserves a safe place to live, yet 15% of Californians now point to housing and homelessness as the "most important issue facing California today, according to the December 2023 *Californians and Their Government Statewide Survey* from the

nonpartisan Public Policy Institute of California.

The League of Women Voters of California supports equal opportunity in housing. From meeting basic human needs to land use and transportation to climate change, this is an

issue that affects all parts of the state and many of our positions. Needs are different in different areas. Some have a greater need for permanent supportive housing for the formerly homeless while others need homelessness prevention — family housing or senior housing, but all areas need state (and federal) support to meet unmet needs.

Here are two [Housing Policy Myths vs Facts](#) put together by California YIMBY and published on the LWVC website. Click the link to see them all.

Myth: We're in the middle of a building boom, but none of the housing is for people like us.

Fact: California is in the slowest period of homebuilding in its history. New homes were down by 20 percent in 2019. We're now building one-third of the homes we built each year in the 1980s.

Myth: New housing causes traffic to increase and takes away our parking.

Fact: New housing near jobs, transit, and amenities reduces traffic, and in some cases eliminates the need for cars altogether. While many residents feel like the street parking in front of their home "belongs" to them, it is in fact public property that belongs to all taxpayers

The League of Women Voters of California supports legislative efforts aimed at California's housing crisis. This includes efforts to increase equal opportunity to decent, stable, and affordable housing as well as prohibiting housing discrimination based on specified personal characteristics, including source of income. We also promote solutions to increase the amount of housing built in a sustainable and accessible manner.

