



# Santa Cruz VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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## President's Message

This year's Annual Meeting of the League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County is coming up on Saturday June 7 with two featured speakers: 2<sup>nd</sup> District Supervisor Kimberly De Serpa and 5th District Supervisor Monica Martinez, two dynamic women who were recently elected to represent their districts and make decisions about priorities and the direction of our county in the coming years. I have booked the Fireside Community Room at the Scotts Valley Library, 251 Kings Village Rd., Scotts Valley, from 1-4 p.m. and was glad to secure this location after attending several programs there recently, which were well attended and most enjoyable.

Each of our guest speakers has been invited, and both have confirmed that their talks will each be about 20 minutes long, with about 10 minutes for question and answer after each, before our essential business meeting happens after a break for refreshments and some socializing. Thank you to Jan Karwin for being willing to assemble our Annual Meeting Kit again, which will include more detail and be emailed to LWV members at least 20 days in advance. Thank you in advance to Mindy Ryan for again handling event publicity. Both the program with featured speakers and business meeting are open to the general public, a condition of using a Community Room at any library branch in Santa Cruz County. Our featured speakers will be conferring on the content and focus of their talks, so your input is welcome. We'll be discussing this at our next LWVSCC board of directors meeting on May 14.

One of our longtime and outstanding League of Women Voters members, journalist Joyce Anderson, was a recent finalist for the Sentinel's Jessica A. York Hero Award. In the article on her three decades of service to the Santa Cruz Community, her work as a board member and leader of the following local organizations was noted: O'Neill Sea Odyssey, the Salvation Army, Community Television Santa Cruz, League of Women Voters, and the American Red Cross. Joyce has served LWVSCC in many ways, with her wonderful hosting of membership get-acquainted events, informal conversations for our board of directors, publicity on Community Television, leadership on the Nominating Committee, and generous serving of refreshments.

## Calendar

### LWVSCC Annual Meeting

**Saturday, June 7, 1:00 – 4:00**

Scotts Valley Library Fireside Community Room  
 251 Kings Village Road  
 Scotts Valley

## Welcome to Our New Members

Our League welcomes ten new members this year. They are:

- Diana Beardslee
- Lisa Flynn
- Denise Gurer
- Penny Hanna
- Joan McCracken
- Roberta Marinelli
- Pamela Roberts
- Fey Triona
- Lara Triona
- Elizabeth Villalobos

We are looking forward to meeting you in person soon!

Welcome to our new members. You have joined a group of shakers and movers in the local community who are concerned with quality of life and willing to communicate with local, state, and national government representatives about making government work. Like Joyce, many of our members have shown they care.

*---Barbara Lewis, LWVSCC President*

## **Please Join us at our Annual Meeting to Hear From Two of Our County Supervisors**

Our five county supervisors represent all of Santa Cruz County except for our four incorporated cities of Scotts Valley, Santa Cruz, Capitola and Watsonville. At our Annual Meeting on June 7, we will hear from two of our county supervisors, Monica Martinez and Kim De Serpa.



Kim De Serpa represents the 2<sup>nd</sup> district, which runs from the edge of Capitola around the bay to the Monterey County border. It also borders Santa Clara County. It includes Aptos, Freedom, Corralitos, La Selva Beach and Nisene Marks State Park.



Monica Martinez represents the 5<sup>th</sup> District, which runs from the edge of Santa Cruz into

the mountains. It includes Felton, Ben Lomond and Boulder Creek and borders both Santa Clara County to the east and San Mateo County to the west. Even if you don't live in one of those districts, you'll find the information will help you understand how the county operates.

## **Herstory Event – Held March 17**

Mindy Ryan, Marilyn Radisch and Pam Newbury staffed a table at the Herstory Event in Santa Cruz on March 13<sup>th</sup>. We met some nice people and gave information to a few who were interested in the League.

## **Member Focus – Sandra Warren**



We all know Sandra Warren – our League Lifetime Member who is always there to open her home for meetings – and her arms to welcome us all in. Sandra joined the League in 1968 – quite the political year – when her husband was in graduate school in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She was invited by a neighborhood friend.

What has kept Sandra interested and involved for all these years? She appreciates the pros and cons of issues that the League handles so well for each election cycle. She also likes how the League handles debates among candidates. The League has done a lot to protect our democracy, and she continues to be impressed with the ways the League helps people focus on dealing with current issues. An issue that stands out to her right now is that of climate change - she is happy to see there are lots of groups focusing on this. Another issue that she realizes is a difficult problem is the homelessness crisis. It's hard to come to grips with this problem, which is why we need the League involved.

Sandra has lots of memories from her years with the League. One goes back to when the chapter met at Cabrillo College - she remembers bringing her son in an infant seat and having him on the table during the meetings. Her son is now 52.

And is there anything Sandra would like to see change? Well – meetings are OK online – but they are more powerful in person. So, here's to Sandra – let's raise a glass to her the next time we meet face to face.

## Local Program Planning

At our recent local Program Planning Meeting, four topics for programming were approved:

- Youth Justice
- Equity in Education (from a legislative perspective)
- Improving Fire Protection
- Tour of Soquel Creek Water District's recycling facility

## Youth Justice

Here is information on how both the State of California and the County of Santa Cruz approach Youth Justice.

### CA Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR)

Their vision is for a shift in how California approaches youth justice.

The OYCR vision of youth justice is one that is framed by accountability and healing rather than punishment, and has been driven by on-the-ground advocates, researchers and probation departments, along with policy, funding, and practice changes, working together to make this new vision of youth justice a reality.

### OYCR Policy

Some key policy areas for OYCR are:

- Promoting equality for youth who are court-involved and youth involved in the child welfare system
- Reducing the transfer of young people into the adult system

- Reducing racial, ethnic, and gender disparities in the juvenile justice system
- Promoting access to higher education and sustainable careers
- Promoting data transparency

### Santa Cruz County Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Commission

What does our local Commission do?

The delinquency prevention focus of the Commission seeks to prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system when possible. The Commission strives to support delinquency prevention activities which include advocating for needed youth services by working with county agencies and community groups, recognizing and promoting programs for youth, and hosting youth-related activities. The Commission is focused on those activities that are primarily designed to prevent juveniles from entering into the court system to begin with. These activities may include advocating for youth and advising both governmental and non-governmental agencies of policy recommendations.

The Juvenile Justice mandate of the Commission is to conduct a yearly inspection of the Juvenile Hall and, after the investigation is complete, make recommendations to the Chief Probation Officer and the Board of Supervisors for changes which are deemed beneficial.

### LWVC Stand on Criminal Justice

Although the League of Women Voters of California doesn't directly address juvenile justice, they have taken positions on criminal justice in the state. Here are the highlights:

#### The LWV California supports:

- A criminal justice system that is just, effective, equitable, transparent, and that fosters public trust at all stages, including policing practices, pre-trial procedures, sentencing, incarceration, and re-entry.
- The elimination of systemic bias, including the disproportionate policing and incarceration of marginalized communities.
- Policing practices that promote safety for both law enforcement officers and the communities they serve.

- Collaboration between government and community throughout every stage of the criminal justice system.
- A focus on humane treatment and rehabilitation with the goal of promoting the successful reentry into communities of those who have been incarcerated; and
- Reliance on evidence-based research in decision-making about law-enforcement programs and policies (including scheduled, periodic audits of program and policy effectiveness)

## **Equity in Education From a Legislative Focus**

### **From the California Department of Education on Ensuring Equity**

Students come to school with diverse backgrounds, abilities, talents, and challenges. Schools ensure equity by recognizing, respecting, and acting on this diversity. A common misperception is that equity means that all students are treated equally in all situations. In fact, high-quality schools have the capacity to differentiate instruction, services, and resource distribution to respond effectively to the diverse needs of their students, with the aim of ensuring that all students benefit equally.

Ensuring equity in education is a necessary component in narrowing the achievement gap.

### **Legislation Enacted in 2025 that supports Equity**

[AB 1955 \(Ward\)](#) prohibits schools from enacting policies that require staff to disclose a student’s gender identity or sexual orientation without the student’s consent.

The law was passed in response to the so-called “trans outing” policies introduced by conservative school boards across the state.

[AB 1821 \(Ramos\)](#) requires public schools to offer instruction on the mistreatment and contributions of Native Americans during Spanish colonization and the California gold rush. The Instruction Quality Commission must consult with California tribes on the development of future curriculum regarding Native American history.

[AB 1805 \(Ta\)](#) mandates that social-science curriculum updated on or after Jan. 1 include instruction on *Mendez v. Westminster School District of Orange County*, a landmark court case that challenged school segregation in California.

But what was *Mendez v. Westminster School district of Orange County*? Well, this is Wikipedia’s explanation (note: links in this article take you to Wikipedia definitions.)

*Mendez, et al v. Westminster School District of Orange County, et al*, (9th Cir. 1947) was a 1947 federal court case that challenged Mexican remedial schools in four districts in [Orange County, California](#). In its ruling, the [United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit](#), held that the forced segregation of [Mexican American](#) students into separate "Mexican schools" was unconstitutional because, as US District Court Judge [Paul J. McCormick](#) stated, "The evidence clearly shows that Spanish-speaking children are retarded in learning English by lack of exposure to its use because of segregation, and that commingling of the entire student body instills and develops a common cultural attitude among the school children which is imperative for the perpetuation of American institutions and ideals."

Mexican Americans, who were historically considered to be white, were unaffected by legal segregation and normally attended segregated white schools in California. The Mendez family, who previously went to white schools without problems, suddenly found their children forced into separate "Schools for Mexicans" when they came to Westminster, even though that was not the norm and it was not legally sanctioned by the state. Starting in the 1940s, some school districts began to establish separate language-based remedial education, arguing that Mexican children had special needs because they were Spanish speakers. The schools existed only for elementary children (K-4) and were intended to prepare them for mainstream English-speaking schools with Anglo-American children. But since many districts began arbitrarily forcing Mexican elementary school children into "Mexican Schools" irrespective of language ability, it

became a form of unlawful discrimination that was superficially similar to legalized racial segregation.

Five Mexican American fathers (Thomas Estrada, William Guzman, Gonzalo Mendez, Frank Palomino, and Lorenzo Ramirez) challenged the practice of Mexican school segregation. They claimed that their children, along with 5,000 other children of "Mexican" ancestry, were victims of unconstitutional discrimination by being forced to attend separate "schools for Mexicans" in the [Westminster](#), [Garden Grove](#), [Santa Ana](#), and [El Modena](#) school districts of [Orange County](#). Mexicans were not in separate schools elsewhere in California.

Soledad Vidaurri went to the [Westminster Elementary School District](#) to enroll her children and those of her brother Gonzalo Mendez: Gonzalo, Geronimo, and [Sylvia](#). Westminster School informed Vidaurri that her children could be admitted to the school. However, Gonzalo, Geronimo, and Sylvia could not be admitted on the basis of their skin color. (Vidaurri's children had light complexions and [Basque](#) surnames and so would not be segregated into a different school.) Upon hearing the news, Vidaurri refused to admit her children to the school if her brother's children were not admitted as well

Gonzalo dedicated the next year to a lawsuit against the Westminster School District of Orange County. The school district offered to compromise by allowing the Mendez children to attend the elementary school without any other students of Mexican American descent.

The Mendez family declined the offer and continued the lawsuit, as they believed in helping out the entire Mexican community,

instead of a handful of children. The family covered most of the expenses for the various witnesses that would be present in the case.<sup>[3]</sup>

Senior District Judge [Paul J. McCormick](#), sitting in Los Angeles, presided at the trial and ruled in favor of Mendez and his co-plaintiffs on February 18, 1946 in finding that separate schools for Mexicans to be an unconstitutional denial of equal protection.<sup>[5]</sup> The school district appealed to the Ninth Federal Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco, which upheld Judge McCormick's decision, finding that the segregation practices violated the Fourteenth Amendment. Although the case was a victory for the families affected, it was narrowly focused on the small number of Mexican remedial schools in Orange County and did not challenge legal segregation in California or elsewhere. Mendez was not framed as a racial equality case, it centered on the fact that Mexicans were white, and the segregation was not legal. The decision preserved legal segregation for non-white minorities.

It could be challenging to teach this history!

## Improving Fire Protection

We want to look at this topic from the perspective of what we can do to help mitigate the risk of wildfires. There is a lot of information about mitigation on the internet. Here are some recommendations from the Enviro Literacy Site:

### Understanding the Human Impact

Before delving into solutions for controlling wildfires, it's important to acknowledge the ways human behavior contributes to the risk. **Careless actions** are a major culprit. Unattended campfires, discarded cigarettes, and improper use of equipment are common ignition sources. Furthermore, **land management practices**, such as neglecting brush and undergrowth removal, can create dangerous fuel loads. The increasing proximity of human development to wildland areas, often referred to as the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), further amplifies the risk, placing more homes and communities in harm's way. Finally, the overarching issue of **climate change**, driven largely by human greenhouse gas emissions, leads to hotter, drier conditions, creating ideal circumstances for wildfires to ignite and spread rapidly.

## Practical Steps to Mitigate Wildfire Risk

There are many actionable steps individuals, communities, and policymakers can take to reduce wildfire risk. These measures can be broadly categorized into personal responsibility, community-level initiatives, and larger-scale policy interventions.

### Personal Responsibility and Awareness

Individual actions can make a significant difference. Here are some key steps individuals can take:

- **Be Careful with Fire:** This is perhaps the most crucial aspect. Always adhere to fire restrictions, which are often imposed during dry periods. When campfires are permitted, ensure they are contained within a fire ring, cleared of vegetation, and completely extinguished with water before leaving. Never discard cigarettes onto dry grass or brush. Similarly, be cautious when using fireworks or machinery that could create sparks.
- **Maintain Your Property:** Create a defensible space around your home by removing dry vegetation, brush, and dead leaves within a radius of 30 to 100 feet. Keep your roof and gutters clear of debris. Store firewood away from your house and ensure your lawn is well-maintained. These measures will help slow or prevent fire from reaching your structure. Consider using fire-resistant building materials when constructing or remodeling.
- **Practice Safe Equipment Use:** When using tools such as lawnmowers,

chainsaws, or ATVs, be sure to keep the area clear of dry vegetation. Maintain your equipment to prevent sparks. Avoid refueling machinery on dry grass.

- **Stay Informed:** Monitor weather forecasts and fire risk levels in your area. Be aware of evacuation routes and create a family emergency plan. Stay up-to-date on local fire regulations and warnings from authorities.
- **Advocate for Prevention:** Share knowledge about wildfire prevention with your friends, family, and neighbors. Encourage others to adopt safer practices.
- **Care with Fireworks:** Have a bucket of water, garden hose or fire extinguisher handy. Consider wetting down the surrounding grass and other vegetation before lighting your fireworks.
- Never let children use fireworks, sparklers or fire crackers unsupervised.
- Don't light fireworks on windy nights.
- Douse used fireworks with water to make sure they are completely extinguished.

### Cars, Tools & Other Combustion Engines

- Don't park a hot car or other machine in dry grass.
- Don't allow gasoline or motor oil to spill on grass or other vegetation.
- Tractors, off-road vehicles and equipment being used in wooded areas, such as chainsaws, must have spark arrestors.

**Get Involved with Community Efforts.** Be a good neighbor. People cause most wildfires. Do your part and practice prevention.

- Wildfires affect entire communities. Everyone needs to work together to manage vegetation and use fire-resistant construction. Find out about efforts in your area and get involved.

