



Santa Cruz VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In this Issue

<i>President's Message</i> -----	1
<i>Calendar</i> -----	1
<i>November 4 Election Vote Options</i> ----	2
<i>County Superintendent Bkg.</i> -----	2-3
<i>Soquel Creek Origins</i> -----	3-4
<i>Rail Trail Report</i> -----	4-5
<i>LWVC Issues</i> -----	5
<i>LWVUS Issue</i> -----	5-6
<i>Unite and Rise 8.5</i> -----	6

Calendar

Dr. Faris Sabbah

K-12 Education Update

Saturday, November 22, 2025

10:15 a.m.—noon

Aptos Library

2695 Soquel Drive

Aptos, CA 95003

75 River Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Tour Pure Water Soquel

Saturday, January 24, 2026

10:00 a.m.

Event details coming soon

National Program Planning

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

At the Home of Sandy Warren

150 Scenic Street

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Local Program Planning

Tuesday, March 3, 2026

1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

At the Home of Sandy Warren

150 Scenic Street

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Thank you to League members Dorothy Fry, Kit Hein, and Tricia Webber, Santa Cruz County Registrar of Voters, for their excellent presentations on Proposition 50 and the redistricting topic, as well as Program Co-Chairs Pam Newbury and Mindy Ryan for handling the October 12 event organization and publicity, and Dee Takemoto and Donna Baldini for showing up to register voters. Easy Voter guides were distributed at the Downtown Library that day and to all branch libraries, with Voter Service Coach Dorothy Fry making arrangements with library staff. Most of those who showed up were engaged, and I was amazed at the impressive number of questions asked and clarifications noted. Tricia Webber commented on the unusually high number of ballots already returned by mail, which would indicate many voters have already decided pro or con on Proposition 50 as well as other measures being voted on by Santa Cruz city residents.

Our November 22 program, co-sponsored with the American Association of University Women, will be a conversation with Dr. Faris Sabbah, Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools, about how current legislation and funding changes are affecting our schools. This event, titled "Changing Tides in Education" will take place from 10:15 a.m.-noon at the Aptos Branch Library, 7695 Soquel Drive, Aptos. I am looking forward to this program and hope many local League of Women Voters members will be able to come to participate and learn about what is happening in education, which is and has historically been one of our major concerns. Thank you to Doreen O'Donovan, Mindy Ryan, Pam Newbury, Denise Gurer, and Kit Hein for their work on this program, including making arrangements and doing publicity.

--Barbara Lewis, President LWVSCC

For the Election – November 4

Ways to Return Your Ballot

- **By Mail:** If you're mailing close to Election Day, walk it into your local post office and request a postmark to make sure it's counted. Our local post offices don't postmark all mail they receive – it is shipped to a regional office (ours is in Richmond) and is postmarked several days later than you drop it off.
- **By Drop Box:** Use an official county drop box anytime during the voting period.
- **In Person:** Deliver your ballot to a vote center, or county elections office by 8 P.M. on Election Day. In Santa Cruz County, Vote Centers are open for several days – a few are even open for a week. One is even open until 9:00 p.m. on the Sunday before Election Day. You can click this link to find out where voting locations are and when they are open. [Voting Center & Drop Box Locations](#)
- **You have options at Vote Centers:** You can just drive up and drop off your ballot in its signed envelope, without ever going inside the Center - but – if you want your ballot counted quickly - consider taking it inside the Center where you can sign in and drop off your ballot in their box without its envelope. (They call this a 'naked

ballot'). Why do this? It will get counted more quickly, since you have been validated by the staff at the center, and the Elections Office will not have to compare your current signature with the one you have on file.

Didn't Receive Your Ballot?

- If you are registered to vote and haven't received your ballot, [check your ballot status online](#).
- You can also contact your county elections office to request a replacement vote-by-mail ballot or vote in person at any vote center.
- Find official election information and deadlines on the [Secretary of State website](#).
- [Track your ballot online](#).

Background on the County Superintendent of Schools



Over the past 25 years, Dr. Faris Sabbah has served as county deputy superintendent, county assistant superintendent, university professor, director, assistant principal, teacher, and instructional aide. He obtained his bachelor's in psychology from UC Santa Cruz, his master's in educational leadership from San Jose State University, and his

doctorate in leadership for educational equity from UC Berkeley.

As County Superintendent of Schools, Faris plays a critical role in supporting the creation of safe and supportive learning environments for all students. This is achieved by working with school district superintendents to set the overarching academic goals for the county's public education system and to support specific efforts to help students achieve those aims. He carries a deep sense of urgency to disrupt inequitable practices. He is committed to partnering with districts and other organizations to create a network of support that propels our students to achieve and thrive.

Dr. Sabbah is committed to the values of diversity, equity and inclusion as he helps lead the evolution of the County Office of Education in addressing the needs of students, districts, and the community. His top priorities are to support students and districts by

expanding the COE presence throughout the county, engaging the community through an ambitious communication plan, developing a data-driven culture of improvement, creating safe spaces for all students, and building programs and opportunities that uplift the voices of students.

In addition to being involved in many community organizations, Faris has received several recognitions including the “Premio Ohtli” Award in 2004 for advocacy on behalf of the Mexican and Mexican American community by the Mexican Consulate in San Jose, CA. He was selected as the California Migrant Education Administrator of the Year by The Fresno County Office of Education in 2007. He was also honored by the Community Assessment Project of Santa Cruz County as a “Community Hero in Education” in 2013 for assisting students in graduating with the skills and knowledge required to compete in a 21st century global economy.

His presentation on November 22 should make for a very interesting and engaging morning.

The Origins and Growth of Soquel Creek Water District

We will be touring Soquel Creek’s Pure Water facility on January 24th. The Soquel Water District is one of the seven largest water districts in Santa Cruz County. It serves 49,000 customers through 14,540 connections. That is 19% of the county.

Here is information on the birth and development of the Soquel Creek Water District:

In the early 1960s, amid growing concerns over flood control and water management in California’s developing coastal communities of Santa Cruz County, residents of Soquel and its neighboring beachside towns took decisive action. In 1961, a local ballot measure approved the formation of a new public agency—the Soquel Creek County Water District—under California’s County Water District Law (Division XII of the Water Code), tasking it with addressing both flooding threats and long-term water needs.

A District Born from Floodwaters and Necessity

The region’s challenges were twofold. Historically, Soquel Creek and other waterways regularly overflowed, inundating downtown Soquel, damaging properties, roads, and farmland. Winter storms frequently swept debris downstream—everything from logs to car parts—sometimes transforming creeks into instant rivers. Though flood-control measures predated the District, structural planning was fragmented and short-term.

Simultaneously, population growth in Soquel, Aptos, Capitola, Seaside, Rio del Mar, and La Selva Beach drove rising demand for reliable drinking water. Before the District, water supply depended largely on private wells tapping groundwater from the coastal basin—a resource that was becoming increasingly strained.

Structure and Leadership

Once established, the new District was governed by a five-member Board of Directors, elected by residents to four-year terms. This governing body was charged with setting policy, overseeing services, and charting the District’s future. District staff and engineers were hired to design and implement infrastructure projects—a bold step toward systemic water resource management.

Municipal Growth: Acquiring Assets & Expanding Services

In 1964, the District acquired the Monterey Bay Water Company, vastly expanding its role in water service provision for the area. This acquisition marked a strategic pivot: the District transitioned from merely flood-control to managing municipal water supply and infrastructure.

By the early 1980s, Soquel Creek County Water District had firmly cemented its identity—but not without a name change. In 1983, "County" was dropped from the official title, and the agency became simply Soquel Creek Water District, reflecting its maturity as a municipal provider.

Building a Foundation

During its first two decades, the District laid critical groundwork:

- Flood control and drainage improvements: Reducing chronic flood risks through structural interventions and coordinated planning.
- Well-field development and groundwater monitoring: Protecting local aquifers to safeguard future drinking water availability.
- Connections and capacity expansion: Following the Monterey Bay acquisition, the District began managing a growing number of water service customers.

Throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, residents recognized the District's value: it brought consistency and professional oversight to an essential resource.

Early Challenges and Proactive Oversight

Critical drought years in 1976 and 1977 pinned concerns on groundwater levels. A 1977 USGS report warned the coastal basin was already experiencing signs of seawater intrusion and recommended

reducing pumping, which was about 7,700 acre-feet annually at that time. This prompted the District to declare a water emergency in 1979.

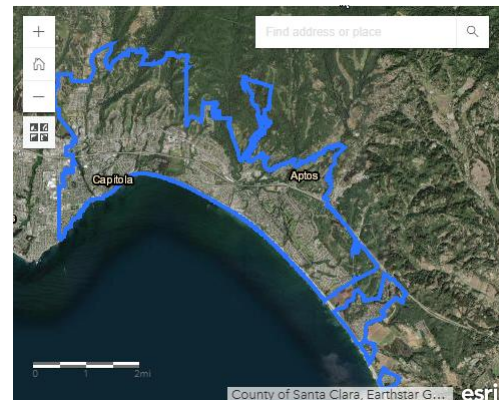
Simultaneously, a coastal monitoring network began taking shape: measuring water levels, salinity, and quality across dozens of wells. This pioneering effort would anchor the District's future water management strategy.

Reflections on a Foundational Era

By the end of its first quarter-century, Soquel Creek Water District had morphed from a fledgling flood agency into a local, not-for-profit water utility. It was now governing water resources with a forward-looking approach: building infrastructure, protecting groundwater, and engaging transparently with stakeholders via elected leadership.

The early decades of Soquel Creek Water District tell the story of a community coming together to confront challenges and lay the groundwork for the water management we rely on today.

Map of the Water District



Elsewhere Around the County

The Rail-Trail Report is Available

The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) is pleased to announce the availability of the Final Draft Concept Report for the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail (ZEPRT) Project. Over the last several months, the RTC engaged with various advisory committees, agencies and partners, stakeholders and community

members to receive input on the Draft Project Concept Report. The full report incorporates feedback received, documents key understandings and outcomes, and tracks outreach conducted for this current phase of work.

“This report represents an important step forward in understanding what zero-emission passenger rail could mean for Santa Cruz County. It provides our community and decision-makers with the facts needed to thoughtfully consider how this system might enhance mobility, sustainability, and access for all,” RTC Executive Director Sarah Christensen said. “Our goal has always been to plan responsibly and transparently, and this study gives us the foundation to do exactly that.”

The RTC publicly released the full Final Project Concept Report on October 24, 2025.

[SCC Rail/Trail Report](#)

LWVC Activities

Here is quick recap of just some of the LWVC Board of Directors’ activity since last spring:

- We hired a new Executive Director, Jenny Farrell, who will start her position with us on October 20. Jenny comes to the League after serving as Executive Director of Mental Health Advocacy Services based in Los Angeles. Read more about [Jenny](#).
- We held a very successful online convention. You can see recordings of the sessions, speeches, and workshops [here](#).
- Leagues all over the state reacted quickly to the special election,

helping to ensure that voters know about the election, what Proposition 50 means, and how to make their voices heard

- We joined in multiple lawsuits to protect voters and voting rights in California.
- We passed a resolution supporting statehood for the District of Columbia.
- The Board has authorized a study to explore the feasibility of adopting a state position on the Judiciary by concurrence. Former LWVC president Chris Carson will head the study. More information is below, including a link to an application for joining the committee to work on the study

LWVUS

What’s on Their Mind?

Our democracy has been tested, coming to a head in the 2024 elections, and will likely continue to be tested in the months and years ahead. As an organization dedicated to empowering voters and defending democracy, the League of Women Voters will continue our work to protect and expand voting rights and challenge those who seek to undermine democratic principles and processes.

“**Women Defend Democracy**” is the new programmatic focus for the League in 2025, centering people power and moving our country towards a stronger, multi-racial democracy.

For 105 years, the League of Women Voters has worked to provide voters with election information, safeguard voter access, uphold election integrity, and defend against efforts to undermine democratic principles. Today, the organization is stronger than ever, with a growing, vibrant membership of activists tackling the challenges to our democracy in every corner of our country. As the League continues to build a membership that reflects America, we recognize the continued challenges our democracy will face.

Through the “Women Defend Democracy” campaign, the League will work to:

- Provide Democracy Education & Election Administration Support
- Restore and Defend Voting Rights Protections

- Abolish the Electoral College
- Protect Democracy Organizations & Institutions
- Fight for Reproductive Freedoms

League of Women Voters is well-positioned to defend attacks on democracy in the coming months and years. Together, we believe in the power of women to create a more perfect democracy.

This campaign kicked off in the first 100 days of the Trump administration and evolved to include the initiative Unite and Rise 8.5

Since the Trump administration took office, we've seen [increased attacks](#) on our democratic systems and a failure by Congress to intervene. This came to a head in early April, when the president [defied a Supreme Court order](#) to return the wrongfully deported Marylander Kilmar Armando Abrego-Garcia.

The following day, LWV CEO Celina Stewart and President Dianna Wynn released the following statement:

"We the people must fight back. That is why the League of Women Voters is launching a powerful new initiative, **Unite and Rise 8.5.**"

What is Unite and Rise 8.5?

On April 17, 2025, LWV CEO Celina Stewart and President Dianna Wynn released the following statement:

"From the flagrant disregard for congressional authority and governmental checks and balances to defying Supreme Court orders...one thing is abundantly clear: **our country is in a constitutional crisis.**

"We the people must fight back. That is why the League of Women Voters is launching a powerful new initiative, **Unite and Rise 8.5.**"

Through Unite and Rise 8.5, we will engage and mobilize 8.5 million voters to protect and preserve our democracy.

Unite & Rise 8.5 aims to build a movement of 8.5 million individuals to unite and rise up against the anti-democratic actions of this administration. Launching in May 2025 and running until the 2026 midterm elections, this initiative is part of our campaign : [Women Defend Democracy](#)

Why 8.5?

The number 8.5 million is the estimated number of voters it would take to bring about change through nonviolent protest. This is based on the [following finding](#) from the Carr-Ryan Center for Human Rights:

"Nonviolent protests are twice as likely to succeed as armed conflicts...and those engaging a threshold of 3.5% of the population have never failed to bring about change."

According to the University of Florida, approximately 245 million Americans were eligible to vote in the 2024 general election. According to the above research, if 3.5% of these eligible voters — 8,575,000 people — engage in nonviolent protests, we *will* bring about meaningful change.

Are We Really In a Constitutional Crisis?

The League defines a Constitutional Crisis as:

When the executive, the legislative, or judiciary branches cannot or will not adequately protect the US Constitution, there are explicit attempts to dismantle a functional democracy within any of the three branches, or when any level of federal government takes action to destroy democratic institutions in a manner that intentionally or purposefully jeopardizes the US Constitution.

When these events occur, the constitution is deemed at the highest serious risk and warrants full-scale action to preserve and protect democratic institutions and civil society."

For more information, click this link;
<https://www.lwv.org/uniteandrise>