The Voter

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF MENDOCINO COUNTY

Empowering voters, defending democracy

Charlene McAllister, President | August 2026 | Jary Stavely and Dorine Real, Editors

League Plans National Day of Action

Unite & Rise for Voting Rights

The Mendocino League will participate in the national Unite & Rise for Voting Rights Day of Action described below by distributing fact sheets about California Voting Rights Act legislation—currently under consideration in Sacramento—at the demonstration in front of the Fort Bragg Guest House on August 8. An article about the two bills (SB 1164 and SB 1360), with links to the fact sheets, may be found in the California League section of this newsletter.

On Saturday, August 8, 2026, the League of Women Voters (LWV), together with hundreds of state and local Leagues and partners, will lead a nationwide "Unite & Rise for Voting Rights" Day of Action to mobilize voters ahead of the 2026 midterm elections. Communities across the country will rally, organize, and take visible public action with one urgent message: in America, voters — not politicians — should decide the future of our democracy.

The Day of Action is a major milestone in the League's Unite and Rise 8.5 initiative, a nationwide effort to engage and mobilize 8.5 million voters by November 2026. The initiative launched in 2025, after the League declared that the United States was — and continues to be — in a Constitutional Crisis. Recent Supreme Court rulings on Birthright Citizenship, money in politics, and the dismantling of the Voting Rights Act, coupled with legislative efforts in Congress, underscore a simple truth: democracy only works when people show up to defend it. Learn more about these events and how to participate at lwv.org/riseforvotingrights.

"Democracy doesn't defend itself, people do," said Celina Stewart, chief executive officer for the League of Women Voters. "On August 8, communities across the country are coming together to send a clear message: our democracy belongs to the people. This Day of Action is more than a single day of events; it's a declaration that voters are organized, energized, and ready to protect the fundamental right that makes all others possible—the freedom to vote."

The run-up to the nationwide Day of Action begins with a virtual National Pep Rally at 3 pm Eastern Time on August 6, bringing together League leaders, voting rights advocates, entertainers, and grassroots organizers. Together, they will celebrate and remind attendees of the power of collective action and equip them with the tools to mobilize their communities. Livestreamed at lwv.org/riseforvotingrights, the event will underscore that protecting democracy requires sustained civic participation—not just on Election Day, but every day.

"Recent court decisions have reminded us that our rights, our freedoms, and our democracy cannot be taken for granted," added Marcia Johnson, chief of activation and justice for the League of Women Voters. "The freedom to vote is foundational to all of us. That's why communities across the country are coming together on August 8 — to demonstrate that protecting democracy requires vigilance, participation, and collective action."

"This moment is about meeting people where they are — in their neighborhoods, at community events, and through trusted local leaders and partners," said Jeanette Senecal, chief of civic learning and impact for the League of Women Voters. "The Unite & Rise for Voting Rights Day of Action is a chance for people across the country to turn concern into action and help their communities prepare for the elections ahead."

Calendar

August 4 (Tuesday) 6 pm online ▼
Sen. McGuire presents town hall on El Nino preparedness

August 5 (Wednesday)
LWVC lobby effort for CA Voting Rights Act

August 6 (Thursday) 1-3 pm County Conference Room
Public meeting on county Housing Element
CA Senate Natural Resources Committee
Comment deadline for Demonstration Forest bill ▼

August 7 Mendocino County
Last day to register as candidate for city councils

August 8 national
Unite and Rise for Voting Rights Day of Action (LWV)
11 am Main St. Fort Bragg
LWVMC joins demo to promote CA Voting Rights Act ▼

August 10 (Monday) midnight
Deadline to register for CZMP hearing ▼

August 11, 12 (Tuesday, Wednesday) 2-5 Online
Hearing for federal review of CZMP ▼

August 22 (Saturday) midnight
Deadline to email comments on CZMP review ▼

September 17 (Thursday) 3-5 Zoom
Mendocino Vision Coastal Planning Update

September 18 (Friday)
New comment deadline for Potter Valley Project ▼

Click on the ▼ symbol to find more details

The public is welcome at these events. Please invite your friends and neighbors.

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President's message ...

Challenges to Voting Rights

by Charlene McAllister

Looking back over history teaches us that change can be slow. Women's suffrage developed globally through a staggered wave of reform. New Zealand pioneered national enfranchisement in 1893, followed by Australia in 1902 and Finland in 1906. (In 1906, the autonomous the Grand Duchy of Finland, which later became the Republic of Finland, was the first country in the world to give all women and all men both the right to vote and the right to run for office). World War I accelerated the expansion of voting rights across Europe and North America, with the US ratifying the 19th Amendment in 1920. Universal, or at least broader, global expansion followed, via the United Nations after WWII.

The struggle over voting rights in the United States dates all the way back to the founding of the nation. The original U.S. Constitution did not define voting rights for citizens, and until 1870, only white men were allowed to vote. Two constitutional amendments changed that. The Fifteenth Amendment (ratified in 1870) extended voting rights to men of all races. However, this amendment was not enough, because African Americans were still denied the right to vote by state constitutions and laws, poll taxes, literacy tests, the "grandfather clause," and outright intimidation. The Twenty-fourth Amendment (ratified in 1964) partly addressed this injustice by prohibiting the use of poll taxes in federal elections. In addition to these constitutional amendments, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 secured voting rights for adult citizens of all races and genders in the form of federal laws that enforced the amendments.

Voting rights are a fundamental component of democratic governance, enabling citizens to choose their representatives, influence public policy, and hold government accountable.

- Laws that restrict voter eligibility, impose strict voter identification requirements, or shorten voter registration periods can disproportionately affect marginalized communities, including racial minorities, low-income citizens, the elderly, and students.
- While proponents argue that Voter ID laws prevent fraud, critics point out that they can create significant obstacles for people without easy access to acceptable identification documents.

LWV promotes an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive. We encourage electoral methods which provide the broadest voter representation possible, and which are expressive of voter choices. Protecting voting rights requires vigilance, participation, and a commitment to inclusive policies that ensure every eligible citizen can meaningfully participate in the democratic process. We must continue the fight!

November Election

Local Filing Deadline Looms

August 7 is the last day to file as a candidate for City Council positions in Mendocino County. Citizens who have an interest may wish to consult Mary Rose Kaczorowski's Mendocino Voice article about the June 25 workshop held at Town Hall in Fort Bragg, at which former council members Dave Turner, Jessica Morsell-Haye, and Bernie Norvell (now 4th District Supervisor) discussed their experiences as candidates and elected officials. They were joined by City Clerk Diana Paoli, who reviewed the requirements for filing. The non-partisan event was organized by the Grassroots Institute and City staff, with the assistance of the Mendocino League of Women Voters.

The following information is taken directly from Mary Rose's article: "Nomination papers are available from the City Clerk Department by calling 707-961-2823 ext.104 or by emailing cityclerk@fortbraggca.gov to make an appointment …. Both Paoli and the Grassroots Institute highlighted a variety of resources for candidates available on the Fort Bragg city elections website and the Mendocino County Registrar of Voters candidate online webpages." The complete workshop was recorded, and may be viewed on the GRI website.

LWVMC midsummer meeting

The UN and Its Work for Women

On the last day of June, the Mendocino League hosted a Zoom discussion focussed on the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. Five women who recently participated in the annual conclave, held in New York each March, shared what they knew and felt about the importance of the "work" which the organization has done, and is still doing. Local journalist and League member Mary Rose Kaczorowski introduced and moderated the discussion. She was joined by Ivy Koek, of the Bay Area, from Soka Gakkai International, a Buddhist organization which, according to its website, promotes "peace, culture, and education" around the world; by Pamela Morgan, of New York, from Zonta International, a global organization working to build a better world for women and girls; by Elmy Bermejo, of San Francisco, an official California Small Business Advocate; and by Bettina Hausmann, of San Diego's UN Association. The participants around this virtual table expressed personal opinions—they were not speaking for their organizations.

Mary Rose began with a review of the UN in general—including the role of Eleanor Roosevelt and other women in its founding, and in its formulation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). A YouTube video provides a history of the UDHR, and its key provisions concerning the rights of women. The UN was founded on a promise to solve world problems internationally, despite differences between nations; such problems include world hunger, pandemics, climate change, humanitarian crises resulting from natural and man-made disasters, war, and many more. It has instituted 80 multilateral agreements to address global problems, and formulated an agenda for sustainable development.

The UN also focuses on areas fundamental to women's equality and human progress—ending violence against women, improving economic opportunity, increasing the proportion of women's leadership, supporting peace and security, strengthening health—"when women are safe, nations are more peaceful," according to UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous. Part of this focus is its annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which first met in 1947 to provide input into the UDHR, and has since pushed for gender-inclusive language, and negotiated important world agreements on women's political rights, their rights in marriage, and their rights to equal pay. The annual CSW includes both government officials and "representatives from civil society," which includes those from NGO's such those who joined the Zoom presentation. Mary Rose suggested that the CSW continues to have relevance, that progress has been made, but that the world is still centuries away from true gender equality. As of the end of 2022, 383M women and girls live in extreme poverty, and every 11 minutes one is killed by one of their relations. Her slide show on the UN is included in this *Voter* email for readers who are interested.

Ivy has European and Japanese parentage, considers the broader world as her home, and has always respected the UN and what it represents. She stressed the UN's provision of civil society input as especially important, giving her and other younger people a true voice in proceedings, broadening their impact beyond what UN staff and government representatives can provide on their own, and giving depth to the consensus eventually reached.

Pamela provided an eloquent summary of how the activities of the UN impact everyone's daily lives, well beyond what news reports about diplomacy and international peacekeeping efforts convey—weather forecasts, GPS, protocols for cell phones, vaccines, travel rules and international currency exchange standards, and language for laws which protect women and girls from discrimination. The UN's CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) is the first global treaty to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in all fields of life; it defines discrimination, sets out measures for equality, and establishes a monitoring committee to review progress. The Women, Peace, and Security Agenda highlights women's role in resolving conflict, recognizing them not only as victims but as leaders in peace building. Pamela said that what people now take for granted in women's rights are the result of decades of UN work.

Elmy has found that working at the UN has been good for her mental health, feeling able to breathe and trust in the company of like-minded people. She pointed out that San Francisco was the first city to adopt CEDAW. Her work helping women in business has an environmental element—climate change has had a disproportionate effect on women. She was pleased to involve younger women at Southwest Airlines in taking action.

Bettina, born in East Germany, became involved with the UN during the Bosnian conflict, and then found its bureaucracy and slowness stifling. Although she has been enlivened by its openness to civil society involvement, she still feels there is a long way to go before its goals can be met. While pleased with the recent UN80 initiative (an 80th year rejuvenation push), she is worried about the lack of progress toward women's equality—there is too much infighting, and the budget for women, already seriously underfunded, has been reduced further. In her view, "we have pretty seats" up in the gallery, but little influence.

Following their initial remarks, the five presenters spoke to each other and those in the Zoom audience, mentioning a recent article on gender mainstreaming, and what local folk might do to become more engaged in the UN and its work on behalf of women. Those who missed the event, or who wish to revisit its many interesting details, may find the recording on You Tube.

JoAn Blackstone

Membership Chair Cindy Plank has told us that former Mendocino League Director JoAn Blackstone passed away on July 13, at the age of 93. Cindy reports that after moving away, JoAn stayed very involved in life, and created newsletters at her residence in Sonoma. "Talking with her on the phone was like talking with her in person when she was here & still active in LWVMC." Fellow former Director Becky Bowen said, "JoAn was a friend to the League and we appreciated her so much —such a kind person." She has shared a photo of JoAn moderating a Board of Supervisors candidate forum in April of 2010.

County Planning Review

On July 16, GRI's Mendo Vision Workgroup held its most recent bi-monthly Zoom meeting regarding county planning and development. Scott Alonso, of Assemblyperson Chris Rogers' office, reported on the status of state demonstration forest management bill AB 2494 and other legislation. Santa Cruz County Supervisor and former Coastal Commission Chair Justin Cummings shared information about renewed oil exploration leases off the California coast. Mendocino County Planning Director Julia Krog gave a summary of the progress of the county-led LCP Update. And Coastal Commission enforcement staffers Ellie Oliver and Josh Levine summarized how the CCC receives complaints about, and ensures compliance with, its Coastal Development Permits (CDPs).

After further amendment, AB 2494 has been passed by the state Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee, and is due for a vote in the Appropriations Committee of the same chamber on August 13. The latest changes involve beefed-up language around preserving research and recreation in the demonstration state forests; clarification regarding when timber harvesting is allowed (and that it, indeed, is); and a strengthening of language promoting tribal co-management. Scott assured those on the call that the legislation's ecological principles remain intact. The bill has the support of 60 environmental and indigenous groups, including the Sierra Club. Residents who wish to support it in the committee vote should address their letters to chair Sen. Sabrina Cervantes using the legislature's comment portal, by August 6. Jade Tippett urged that Assemblyperson Rogers' office do whatever it can to persuade CalFire employees to back the bill, as its union is currently in opposition. Asked about other legislation, Scott said that AB 2461 (regarding drilling bond requirements), AB 1699 (easing restrictions on tribal control burns), and AB 1761 (adding disclosures to the bills of power aggregators like Sonoma Clean Power) were all progressing.

Justin, who also works with The Save My Coast Coalition, presented a slide show about the Trump administration's efforts both to open up new areas for oil & gas drilling, and to allow deep sea mineral extraction. While the coalition (a re-establishment of the group which successfully stymied offshore leases in the 1980s) is attempting to preserve the full length of time for public comments on the leases, and to allow local governments to make recommendations about them, the federal authorities are trying to shorten the process and to forestall local government feedback. Some 80% of regional coastal agencies have joined the coalition, as well as many coastal cities. It is working to develop pertinent information, and to build up a legal record to prevent the leases. Most counties have ordinances prohibiting new onshore petroleum processing, and the coalition is promoting similar measures for cities and counties to deny onshore processing of raw material from deep sea mineral extraction, as well. Santa Cruz voters will consider such a prohibition in a ballot measure this November. Justin was able to share a second slide show concerning the Commerce Dept.'s effort to restrict the Coastal Commission's legal authority over the Coastal Zone, by decertifying California's Coastal Zone Management Program (CZMP). Information on submitting comments for this "evaluation" may be found in the following article.

Julia, who was working her next-to-last day for Mendocino County before starting a new job in Marin, said that the Sea Level Rise Resiliency Study report on asset exposure is now finished, and that the next phase, reviewing solutions to the expected problems, is set to begin, with many opportunities for pubic input. The SLR Baseline Policies will go before the county Planning Commission on August 26, and are expected to be submitted to the Supervisors on Sept. 26, at a meeting in Fort Bragg. The Comprehensive Grant studies by outside consultants are now largely complete—the next step will be to develop policies for the various areas under consideration. She anticipates that these will be proposed one area at a time, so that public input can be more easily given and understood. Public outreach meetings for this part of the LCP Update in the different areas of the county have yet to be scheduled, although there will be one about the separate county Housing Element on Aug. 6, from 1–3 pm in the County Conference Room.

Josh presented a slide show, which began with a review of how the Coastal Commission was established, and proceeded to how its decisions get enforced. There are two kinds of issues which he, the enforcement staffer assigned to Mendocino County (among other areas), and Ellie, who supervises a larger area, investigate—permit violations, in which the CDP has not been followed, and un-permitted development. Problems which staff cannot resolve on the ground are referred to headquarters for review, and may be presented to the CCC itself for further action. Ultimately, penalties may reach $11,250/day, depending on the circumstances and the degree of the violation. Enforcement is sometimes referred to local government agencies, as well. The staff relies on the public to report problems, and Josh may be reached via joshua.levine@coastal.ca.gov, or 707-377-7624. Photos are often helpful.

The two hour meeting was recorded, and its informative slide shows and discussions may be viewed on You Tube. County planners taking over for Julia in the near-term are Liam Crowley (crowleyl@mendocinocounty.gov), and Nash Gonzalez (gonzalezn@mendocinocounty.gov). A North Coast Journal article about the resolution of a permit violation in Humboldt County gives context to the enforcement process. The next coastal planning and development meeting is scheduled for September 17, from 3–5. A discussion of “managed retreat” from the coastal edge is promised for the near future.

Action opportunity ...

Offshore Oil, Again

You don’t have to live in the Coastal Zone to understand that the Coastal Zone Management Program (basically, the mechanism by which the Coastal Commission acts for California under federal oversight) protects not only our quality of life and the quality of life for all Californians, but also the nearshore and marine living systems. The Trump administration is attacking the CZMP through a NOAA review process. The Surfrider Foundation explains:

“When the California Coastal Commission twice voted not to approve SpaceX's plans to dramatically increase rocket launches from Vandenberg Space Force Base … the Trump administration took notice. In August 2025, President Trump signed Executive Order 14335 directing federal agencies to evaluate whether California's coastal review authority was an obstacle to the space industry, and to consider stripping the state of that authority altogether. That review process set the stage for the Commerce Department's broader performance audit of California's entire coastal management program, which is now underway.

“The offshore drilling connection makes the stakes even clearer. The [Coastal Commission] is California's primary legal tool for objecting to oil and gas drilling in federal waters off its coast. The Trump administration has already taken formal steps toward reopening California's waters to offshore drilling … If the Section 312 review succeeds in weakening or revoking California's consistency authority, the state would lose its most powerful mechanism for blocking those leases from moving forward — which is likely the point."

Coastal Zone Management Program Hearings

NOAA is seeking public comment as part of the review process. The public can provide input in two ways:

- *Virtual Public Meetings:* Provide oral comments during virtual public meetings on August 11 and 12, from 2 to 5 pm (PDT). "NOAA will conduct the virtual public meetings via Adobe Connect. Each person who wants to attend either meeting must electronically register **by August 10, 2026, at 11:59 pm PT.** Attendance at each virtual public meeting will be limited to 1,000 individuals; therefore, NOAA requests that individuals attend only one meeting, on either August 11 or 12. Register for either meeting at this link.
- *Email:* Send written comments to czma.california-evaluation@noaa.gov with "Comments on Performance Evaluation of the California Coastal Management Program" in the subject line. **Deadline: August 22, 2026, 11:59 pm PT.**

The hearing announcement mentions that,"In particular, NOAA seeks any new input from relevant stakeholders regarding spaceport infrastructure, offshore oil production, pipeline maintenance, desalination projects, and undersea cables."

The California Natural Resources Agency has a Coastal Zone Management Act Federal Review Fact Sheet which could provide factual background for your comments. Surfriders also have an action page with talking points.

County and Organization Comments

Another way to be heard is to influence governments and organizations to submit comments. The Del Norte Board of Supervisors has sent a comment letter supporting the Coastal Program, although some supervisors had misgivings about criticizing the administration. What about the county of Mendocino and the cities?

The Surfrider Foundation is sending comments. What about other organizations you belong to?

County News Reports

Department Heads Follow Up on State Audit

On July 22 Elise Cox filed a story based on what the Supervisors heard on July 21: "Six months after the December 2025 state audit, Mendocino County departments reported mixed progress on required reforms, with two department heads submitting written updates but the Assessor's office missing the deadline entirely. The state auditor has yet to verify the responses."

Difficulty Updating Tax Assessments

In another story Elise suggests, "The county Assessor's Office failed to timely assess roughly $3 billion in property value over tax years 2021 through 2025, delaying about $33 million a year in tax revenue, records show. Most was recovered through late corrections, but some assessments fell outside California's four-year statute of limitations and could not be recouped."

Julia Krog Resigns from Planning Department

A July 8 Mendo Local story gives details about the change in leadership at the County Department of Planning and Building Services. Though Julia is moving to a job in Marin County, she promised during the Mendocino Vision planning meeting to be available for consultation about the ongoing LCP Update effort.

Road Tax Won't Be on November Ballot

Elise Cox reports, "Mendocino County supervisors voted 3-2 on July 21 against placing a permanent 1% road-repair sales tax on the November ballot, one vote short of the four needed to advance it. The measure would have raised about $5.5 million a year — far below the $220 million officials estimate is needed over the next decade to restore county roads." Her story gives details about how and why the Supervisors voted.

Local Farms-to-Food-Banks Program Ended

According to Roger Coryell in the Mendocino Voice, "A federal program that paid Mendocino County farmers to grow produce for local food banks ended in May after the Trump administration canceled contracts. The program had distributed more than 70,000 pounds of local food annually through 39 farms."

Silver Lining in Recent Earthquake Damage

"Grocery Outlet donated nine pallets of food to the Willits Food Bank even as the store remained closed for repairs caused by the earthquake. 'The good news is we've got a lot of good stuff going over to the Food Bank, the bad news is we're still a few weeks away [from reopening],' said David McKinney of the Willits Grocery Outlet." The story appeared in the Willits Weekly on July 23 (p.7).

Hopland Affected by AT&T's Appeal to Feds

Another Mendocino Voice article by Roger Coryell explores the ramifications of a recent development in the struggle over preserving landline service in Mendocino County. "AT&T won federal permission on June 29 to end copper landline service for about 184,000 California customers, including in Hopland, with disconnections possible as early as June 1, 2027." Although other rural areas are still (currently) protected by California laws and rules, Hopland's location along the Highway 101 corridor makes it different.

More Potter Valley Project News

Two more stories about P.G.&E.'s petition to decommission the Potter Valley Project appeared last month. Roger Coryell's July 24 Mendocino Voice article reported that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) had pushed back the public comment deadline on PG&E's Potter Valley Project decommissioning plan from July 24 to September 18, adding nearly two months for input. Phil Barber's July 29 article in the Press-Democrat reported that FERC had denied a bid by the Riverside County-based Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District to intervene in the decommissioning process, ruling that it had not provided evidence to justify its late request to have a voice in the matter.

Coastal News Stories

PUC Comes to Mendocino Coast

Last month the California Public Utilities Commission conducted a business meeting in Fort Bragg. Mary Rose Kaczorowski's Mendocino Voice story contains details about the July 2 session, which included discussions of affordability programs and access.

ICE Makes Arrest in Cleone

Elise Cox's July 17 story provides details about an incident which many coastal residents heard about through social media and announcement bulletins. "U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrested Juan Arenas-Cinega, 46, in Cleone on July 15 in a targeted operation; ICE says he has multiple DUI and spousal-abuse convictions and illegally re-entered the U.S. after a prior deportation."

Voter readers concerned about ICE activities may wish to follow the links in this summary from EdSource, which on July 16 published a special report "on the number of children in California detained and deported by that agency. This project includes analysis of the data (ICE has detained more than 650 children in California under Trump's deportation crackdown), a story about one child who was deported and the way it affected her classmates ('Wendy isn't here.' Bay Area third graders grieve a classmate's deportation), a podcast (More than 400 California children deported by the Trump administration. Here's how classmates grieved one), and an interactive map (From border to neighborhoods: ICE detainments of children in California shift under Trump) showing what happened to children who were detained in California."

Blues Beach Land Transfer

The previously announced transfer of coastal property from Caltrans to indigenous management was the subject of several more stories last month. "Caltrans is transferring the 136-acre Blues Beach coastal property, at no cost, to Kai Poma, a nonprofit organized by the Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians, Round Valley Indian Tribes, and Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians." Savanna Robinson wrote an article about the changeover for the Mendocino Voice, while Alex Wigglesworth reported on it in the LA Times . Frank Hartzell discussed Caltrans' position on camping access to the area on July 1.

South Chadbourne (Blues) Beach

North Chadbourne (Blues) Beach, now largely buried under CalTrans' highway rescue project

Humboldt Coastal Land Return

A July 28 press release from the Yurok Tribe begins, "Save the Redwoods League transferred 125 acres of land in the heart of Yurok ancestral territory back to the Yurok Tribe through a transformational agreement that prioritizes tribal land-management practices, creates a new public space and permanently protects critical salmon habitat." The space, known as 'O Rew Redwoods Gateway, will open for recreational access on August 1, 2026, in Orick, California at the southern end of Redwood National and State Parks (RNSP).

The complete press release includes photos and a map. An additional story about the transfer, by Paul Rogers of the Bay Area News Group, was published in several publications, including the Marin Independent Journal.

Local Aspect to Recent Court Decision

"In 1884, a Mendocino resident helped ensure today's birthright citizenship," is the lead for Carole Brodsky's July 10 article in the Ukiah Daily Journal, which reveals that Look Tin Eli, whose 1884 court victory secured birthright citizenship for California-born Chinese Americans, and whose case helped pave the way for the precedent in this summer's SCOTUS birthright citizenship decision, was born in the town of Mendocino.

South Coast Healthcare Access Curtailed

According to Carole Brodsky's July 16 Ukiah Daily Journal article, the South Coast's Action Network, a 20-year-old nonprofit providing youth and family services on the Mendocino and Sonoma coasts, ceased operations June 30 after failing to secure enough funding to continue. Interim director Miles Clark attributed the closure to shifts in health-care funding that steered dollars toward larger behavioral-health providers equipped for insurance and Medi-Cal billing.

Sunflower Seastars Arouse Hope

Roger Coryell sounded an optimistic note in his July 10 article about the reappearance of sunflower seastars on the Mendocino coast. A Mendo Local summary of the piece states, "their return raises hope the ecosystem could recover without relying solely on labor-intensive culling of purple sea urchins."

Caspar Pond Trail Opens

On July 25, coastal nature enthusiasts celebrated the opening of a trail around the farm pond just east of Highway One in Caspar. An article by Savanna Robinson announced the opening, which was made possible by a $55K grant from the Mendocino Coast Audubon Society and a public-access easement donated by landowner Michael St. John, with trail maintenance provided by the Mendocino Land Trust. Photos of the ribbon cutting were posted on the birdwatching organization's Facebook page.

State Forest Research

Voter readers who have an interest in the Jackson Demonstration State Forest and AB 2494 [see Coastal Planning article in this issue] may wish to learn about a recent forestry research project recently launched there. (Continuing research having been the subject of some debate and amendments to the proposed legislation.) Mary Rose Kaczorowski's Mendocino Voice article describes how the project, conducted by the University of Nevada Reno, is designed to test three strategies—resistance, resilience and transition—which may help coast redwoods adapt to climate change.

Preparing for Weather Extremes

State Senator Mike McGuire has announced a Town Hall regarding the Super El Niño conditions expected this storm year off the California coast, to be held on Tuesday, August from 4 at 6 pm. In an email message he writes, "We want to make sure you're prepared for what has become a historic Super El Niño event, continuing to build off the California coast. This Super El Niño is raising alarm bells among scientists and meteorologists about the potential for larger and more destructive winter storms, significant late season flooding events, ocean-based heat waves, and enhanced summertime monsoonal moisture which could bring lightning to fire-prone regions of Northern California. While there's been a lot of hype around this potential major weather event, we want to separate fact from fiction and give you the straight scoop about what you can expect this fall and winter, when experts predict it will hit, and how challenging conditions may be."

The event will include "an all-star panel of the nation's best and brightest weather and ocean experts, including one of America's top climate scientists, Dr. Daniel Swain, to give us the very latest. These experts will also do a deep dive into this fall's forecast, while detailing disaster readiness and the most important steps that neighbors can take to prepare." Sen. McGuire's website has a link for viewing the livestreamed presentation on YouTube.

Climate Information Retrieved

The Sonoma County League has posted the following information on Facebook: "Visit https://www.climate.us/climatedashboard. This site re-creates the old 'climate dashboard' that was on the government site. It contains more than a dozen key graphs related to climate change. It also features a 15-year collection of climate news and stories, expert blogs, visual status reports on key climate indicators, maps and data pathways, climate literacy resources, and classroom materials. Hurrah for these dedicated scientists working so hard to keep us informed."

An opinion about

Housing in Mendocino County

by Del Potter

In a July 14 story, Elise Cox reported on the plight of an 81 year-old coastal resident facing eviction. The piece is the first in a projected series on "the housing challenges facing our oldest residents." Soon after, the following essay appeared on the Mendocino Announce List under the title, Op ed: It's My Two Acres: The New Enclosure of Mendocino County.

Jeannie Storm's belongings are stacked in boxes by the door of a leaking trailer on Franklin Road. She is 81 years old. She has Stage 4 breast cancer, a $300 monthly housing budget, and until July 1 she had a place to live. Her eviction arrived on an answering machine: "Just giving you a heads-up."

An answering machine message is not an eviction notice. In Mendocino County, it works like one.

Storm has now been dispossessed twice in three years. The first time came three days after her partner Wayne died on Christmas Day 2023. For twenty years they had lived in the foreman's house on a ranch out on Ten Mile, housing that came with Wayne's labor and vanished with it. The English had a name for this arrangement: the tied cottage. The agricultural worker lived at the pleasure of the estate, and when his work ended, by age, injury, or death, so did his family's shelter. It was a scandal of the nineteenth century. It is a working fact of the twenty-first, on the Mendocino Coast, and nobody thought to call it anything at all.

The second dispossession is the one Elise Cox chronicled this month in MendoLocal.News. A trailer with a roof that leaks in almost every room. Rats through the cupboard. Black mold blooming on a bedroom ceiling. No lease, because rural tenancy still runs on handshake and grievance, which means the tenant holds nothing and the owner holds everything. And a landlord who, asked about the 81-year-old cancer patient she is putting out, gave the newspaper the most clarifying quote of the year: "It's my two houses, my two acres. She can find another place to live."

She cannot, of course. That is the point. Storm has applications in at every senior complex on the coast: Duncan Place, Cypress Ridge, Plateau, Moura. The waiting lists run for years. A friend of hers just got into Cypress Ridge after waiting six. Storm worked at Cypress for years, caring for its residents. Now she must outlive a six-year queue to be allowed to join them.

2002, when the Mendocino Institute's Cal Winslow surveyed the coast's housing emergency, the average wait for affordable senior housing was 1.7 years. A generation of workshops, housing elements, task forces and conferences later, the wait has more than tripled. The county's over-85 population is projected to more than triple again by 2040. The queue is a mortuary list, not a housing program.

What Marx would recognize

There is a name for what is happening to Jeannie Storm, and it is older than she is. Marx put it at the center of Capital: the "so-called primitive accumulation," the long violence by which people were separated from the land and shelter they held by custom so that both could be converted into property that earns. Between 1750 and 1850, Parliament passed some four thousand acts of enclosure, privatizing nearly seven million acres of English common land. The commoners had no deeds. They had use: the grazed cow, the gathered wood, the cottage held by memory and mutual understanding. The law they were expelled under was written by the men who expelled them, and it was all perfectly legal, which is what the law was for.

Enclosure never ended. On the Mendocino Coast the commons being enclosed is the informal housing stock that actually sheltered the rural poor and the rural old: the trailers, the outbuildings, the foreman's houses, the funky cabins, the $300 arrangements without leases. That stock is being cleared, parcel by parcel, not by parliamentary act but by the quiet arithmetic of the amenity economy. A trailer that shelters a dying caregiver for $300 a month is a liability. The same structure, repaired and photographed, is a vacation rental grossing that much in a weekend. Winslow found real estate agents in 2002 estimating that as much as 30 percent of coastal housing stock was already in vacation rental use, over 50 percent on some streets, with more than a third of the homes in Mendocino and Caspar owned by absentee landlords. The census data since has only confirmed the pattern: nearly one in five housing units in the Mendocino-Caspar area stands vacant, most of that seasonal, second homes dark eleven months of the year while the people who cook the food and change the beds and empty the bedpans of the visitor economy drive in from Willits, or sleep in their cars, or wait.

This is the part the housing debate keeps missing when it talks about supply. Mendocino does not lack roofs. It lacks roofs that people who work here, or who worked here for fifty years, are permitted to live under. Housing has been enclosed: withdrawn from use and converted to asset, its price set not by local wages but by Bay Area money looking for a view. Marx called that ground rent, the tribute the landless pay for permission to exist on the earth. Gittings said it plainer: my two houses, my two acres.

And the county? When MendoLocal.News asked what help existed for a woman with a 60-day deadline, the Social Services deputy director explained that the standard response is an interview, a risk assessment, and a service plan, completed within 90 days. The math is not hard. The eviction outruns the assessment by a month. A social worker visited Storm once. “One lady came by but nothing happened,” Storm said. The department, to be fair, took a moment to recognize the incredible work of its team.

What a county can actually do

The temptation in a rural county is to plead poverty and point at Sacramento. But enclosure was carried out locally, parcel by parcel, and it can be contested locally, ordinance by ordinance. None of what follows requires a new state law. It requires three votes on the Board of Supervisors.

First, close the eviction gap. State just-cause protection is a sieve: it exempts most single-family homes and does little for the no-lease, informal tenancies that dominate rural housing. Counties can adopt their own just-cause ordinances covering the unincorporated areas, with mandatory relocation assistance when a landlord displaces a tenant who is elderly, disabled, or long-tenured, scaled steep enough that clearing out an 81-year-old costs the owner something real. Pair it with county-funded eviction defense. A tenant with a lawyer is a tenant with time, and time is what the waiting list demands.

Second, make the enclosed stock pay for what it displaced. The county already taxes tourists who sleep in short-term rentals; it should tax the conversion itself. A meaningful annual fee on every whole-home short-term rental, and a voter-approved vacancy assessment on homes left empty most of the year, would do two things at once: slow the bleeding of housing stock into the visitor economy, and fund a permanent county housing trust with a dedicated revenue stream, the mechanism Winslow’s conferences recommended twenty-four years ago. The county has been holding stakeholder sessions on short-term rental rules for years while supervisors debate permit mechanics. The question on the table is not noise or parking. It is whether housing in this county exists for the people in it.

Third, rebuild a commons. The Community Development Commission, the county’s own housing authority, should be capitalized to act as a public developer, not merely a voucher administrator: acquiring failing motels and mobile home parks before speculators do, building small senior infill on the church lots and school district remnants and county surplus parcels every coastal town contains. Put county land into a community land trust so it can never be enclosed again. And legalize the informal stock instead of condemning it: an amnesty-and-repair program for the trailers and backyard units where the rural poor already live, with county money for the roof and the wiring in exchange for recorded affordability covenants. The habitability laws Storm’s trailer violates should trigger repair funds and tenant protection, not demolition and another eviction.

Fourth, protect the last commons standing: mobile home and trailer tenancies, the largest stock of unsubsidized affordable housing in rural California, should be brought under county rent stabilization before they too are cleared for higher uses.

Every one of these is within the police power, the taxing power, or the purchasing power of Mendocino County government. What has been missing is the willingness to say out loud that the crisis is not a shortage but a transfer: housing moving from the old, the sick, and the working poor to the portfolios of people who visit.

Jeannie Storm buried a son and a partner in this county. She spent fifty years on this coast caring for other people’s bodies, and she asks for almost nothing now: a small room in town, near her doctors, where she can unpack her son’s photographs and stop driving. When her boy was small, they traded a refrain at bedtime: I love you more than the moon, I love you more than the stars. The county she gave her working life to offers her a risk assessment on a 90-day clock.

They will tell you the housing market is complicated. It is not complicated. It is two houses and two acres, multiplied by every parcel on the coast, and an old woman with her life in boxes by the door.

Sources: Elise Cox, "An 81-Year-Old Faces Eviction as Affordable Senior Housing Waitlists Stretch for Years," MendoLocal.News, July 14, 2026; Cal Winslow, "Mendocino Coast: The Crisis in Affordable Housing," Mendocino Institute, September 2002; Karl Marx, Capital, Vol. I, Part VIII; U.S. Census/ACS housing occupancy data for Fort Bragg and Mendocino-Caspar; Mendocino County Housing Element 2019–2027; reporting on the county's short-term rental ordinance process, The Mendocino Voice, 2025–2026.

California League Updates

Primary Election Reform

The California League and Common Cause have sponsored a series of webinars about reforming the state's primary election system. The primary focus of the discussion has been on the situation that, since voter turnout for primaries is significantly lower than that for November general elections, at the county level, an outright winner with more than 50% of the vote, has been chosen by only a small portion of the electorate. And by voters who are proportionately richer and whiter than in the electorate as a whole. The proposed solution is to carry the top two finishers into the fall election, whether the higher vote-getter has 50% of the vote or not. This is what already happens in state and regional contests. Its practical effect for Mendocino County this year would have been for the District 5 Supervisor race to be repeated this November with the top two finishers.

The following information about the July 22 webinar was provided to attendees: "We appreciated the opportunity to converse with so many advocates, organizers, and community leaders committed to strengthening our democracy and expanding voter participation across California. A special thank you to our panelists and moderator—Jala Ashan Abner, Program Associate, California Common Cause; Sky Allen, Executive Director, Inland Empire United; Savannah Jorgensen, Public Policy & Organizing Manager, League of Women Voters of California; Moderator: Ninochka McTaggart, League of Women Voters of Greater Los Angeles. Please find the presenters' slide decks from the webinar here! For those who would like to revisit the discussion or share it with others, a recording of the webinar can be accessed here: July 22, 2026 Primary Reform Webinar Recording. To learn more about the Democracy Gap and our work to ensure elections better reflect voters' will, please visit TheDemocracyGap.com."

Spotlight on Water

The LWV California Water Interest Group began writing monthly Water Spotlight articles in April 2026 with the intent to educate LWV members across California on the complex issues of water use. Topics include historical, environmental, infrastructure, and policy challenges, as a foundation for actions LWV may want to take. Topics will focus on current LWV positions and beyond. The Water Spotlight will explore different aspects of this complicated situation and look at solutions. The August Water Spotlight concerns "water equity." Previous articles have been published on the Diablo Valley League website. For questions, or to receive articles directly, email: water@lwvc.org.

Support for Detention Center Transparency

The League of Women Voters of California strongly supports SB 423 (Gonzalez), the Detention Facility Transparency Act. SB 423 arrives at an extraordinary and alarming moment. Under the Trump administration's mass detention agenda, immigration detention has climbed to the highest level ever recorded – surpassing 70,000 people held nationwide for the first time in the agency's history, an increase of roughly 84 percent in a single year, and driven overwhelmingly by the detention of people with no criminal conviction. Deaths, medical neglect, sexual abuse, and crisis calls mount daily inside the facilities holding detainees. California has not been spared. SB 423 responds directly to that crisis by guaranteeing public access to the records that reveal what is happening behind detention walls. Read the full letter LWVC Support Letter. To see more about our latest advocacy on California bills, visit our Bill Status Report.

California League works to protect

Fair Elections

California Voting Rights Act

Our sponsored voting rights legislation moved forward this month as SB 1164 and SB 1360, both authored by Senator Cervantes, passed their Assembly policy committees. Together, these two bills make up the California Voting Rights Act of 2026. SB 1164 targets vote dilution and voter suppression. It protects against district maps or election systems that weaken the voting power of communities, and it gives Californians a direct path to enforce voting rights in state court. SB 1360 focuses on language access. It locks federal language assistance requirements into state law, so voters won't lose in-language ballots if federal coverage lapses, and it extends coverage to communities not currently protected, including Somali and Arabic speakers. What's next: Both bills sit in the Assembly fiscal committee until the Legislature returns from summer recess in August.

LWVC has asked for support: "Your help in advocating for the CA Voting Rights Act of 2026 by contacting your assemblymembers and educating the community are powerful ways to take action. … LWVC will be lobbying on them both on August 5 with a lot of coalition partners." To support your advocacy, the California Democracy Partnership has prepared concise, clear fact sheets for both bills. LWVMC will also be using these fact sheets to promote the Act on August 8 and beyond.

Safeguarding Our Elections

SB 884 (Umberg) Moves Forward: If passed, this bill will add extra protections against intimidation at polling places and make voting methods more accessible. Read our support letter. LWVC stood alongside Senator Umberg and California Common Cause to address the need for this important voting rights bill and to call on legislators to pass it. Hear our remarks from the press conference.

Election Protection Panel Conversation

Our Deputy Director, Dora Rose, recently joined CalNonprofits for a crucial panel presentation on "Securing the Right to Vote: Election Protection Strategies." She discussed the coordinated attacks on voting rights – from federal actions and court decisions to California's voter ID initiative and local election denialism – and the League's work to fight back. "The work is double-sided: fighting the threats, and simultaneously building the infrastructure that invites people back in." That means defending voters in court, strengthening California law, expanding language access, and supporting trusted community organizations that help every voter participate.

State League Positions

on November Ballot Initiatives

LWVC is hard at work analyzing newly qualified ballot measures. We will publish our full Vote with the League recommendations in early September. As an official proponent of Propositions 4 and 5 and an official opponent of Proposition 39, we are actively leading campaigns on all three measures.

Proposition 4—YES: Prop 4 will give communities the freedom to adopt public financing programs that help qualified candidates compete without personal wealth or powerful donors. Public financing also opens the playing field to candidates who reflect California's full diversity. When Latino, Asian American, and Black Californians (nearly two-thirds of our population) see candidates who understand their lives and concerns, they have more reason to engage and vote. Vote YES to build a government that answers to all of us.

Proposition 5—YES: California's recall election process should remove officials who abuse their power, not give losing political factions a shortcut to overturn an election. Prop 5 closes the loophole that can allow a replacement candidate to take office with only a small fraction of the vote. Vote YES to protect majority rule and return the recall to its intended purpose.

Proposition 39—NO: Prop 39 is built on the same election lies Donald Trump has used to undermine trust in our democracy and grab power. It would waste hundreds of millions of dollars imposing new, unnecessary ID requirements, expose voters' personal information and be a gift to identity thieves, and create new excuses to reject valid ballots over minor mistakes or mismatched records. Vote **NO** to stop Trump's election lies from taking away Californians' voices and votes.

Tip: Bookmark our Ballot Initiatives Page to track our recommendations as they drop.

LWVUS News

Convention Links

Voter readers who wish to know more about U.S. League Convention held in June are invited to try the following links.

- Presentation Materials - Convention 2026: Women Unite & Rise
- Daily Briefings (captures actions taken by delegates)
- 2026 Convention Recordings
- Photos on LWV's Flickr here

Thoughts on Expanding the Supreme Court

On July 16 the U.S. League published a blog entry about the current Supreme Court's latest decisions, and some recent proposals to expand the number of sitting Justices. The article reviews the history of what happened when FDR had New Deal legislation thwarted, and tried to expand the Court, and draws some conclusions for present day Court reformers. *Voter* readers with a penchant for history, and concern for the law, may appreciate reviewing the entry.

Threat to Block Mail-In Voting

June 28: In a recent The Hill article, LWV CEO Celina Stewart shared her response to Postmaster General David Steiner's remarks on the refusal to deliver mail ballots in states that won't provide sensitive voter data to the federal government: "The comments that he made are particularly concerning because voting is a right, and now it's being presented as like this risk profile, and when access to the ballot starts being treated as suspicious behavior, which I think is the underlying thing here, democracy itself starts to be audited, I think, which is really problematic."

Removal of Election Assistance Commissioners

July 10: "The American people deserve elections administered by trusted professionals, not shaped by political interference. This is not a routine personnel decision — it is a dangerous escalation in the effort to weaken the safeguards that protect free and fair elections in the November midterms.…" Read the complete statement.

The Televised Speech on the 2020 Election

July 16: "The League of Women Voters strongly denounces President Trump's false, outlandish, and indefensible claims related to the security of US elections. Continuing to spread allegations that have been repeatedly debunked by experts through countless court proceedings not only erodes public confidence in the democratic process but also further weakens the institutions that protect our freedom to vote. This is yet another brazen attempt to undermine elections and suppress voter turnout.…" Read the complete statement.

Executive Order Restricting Mail-in Voting

On July 29, LWVUS commented on the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals' decision: "Yesterday's ruling does not change what is at stake for voters. The freedom to vote is fundamental to our democracy, and it is deeply troubling that, just months before the 2026 midterm elections, voters are once again being forced to navigate uncertainty and confusion about the rules that govern our access to the ballot … While the court declined to block the executive order at this stage, the serious concerns surrounding this proposal remain. … [V]oters deserve election rules that are transparent, stable, and designed to expand participation — not create confusion or create new barriers to the ballot box." Read the complete statement.

Land Acknowledgement

The League of Women Voters of Mendocino County wishes to honor the land we are on and its native peoples. We want to offer recognition and respect; to counter the "doctrine of discovery" with the true story of the people who were already here; to support larger truth-telling and reconciliation efforts; and to remind ourselves that colonization is still happening. We acknowledge that the land where we live and work is un-ceded territory of indigenous peoples since time began. We are surrounded by the traditional, ancestral territory and current homeland of many indigenous nations.

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LWV Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization,
encourages informed and active participation in government,
strives to increase understanding
of major public policy issues, and influences public policy