



Legislative Interview Kit

Legislative Interview Reports Due April 15, 2020

Making Democracy Work: An Equity Lens

The League of Women Voters of California is working to apply an “equity lens” by analyzing our processes and foundational assumptions from the perspective of how they impact marginalized and underrepresented individuals and communities. To that end, this kit weaves in explanations of ways the legislative interview questions touch on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion.

In that spirit, we encourage you to proactively and mindfully form interview teams that include young members, people of color, and other individuals from underrepresented groups. With legislative interviews you have the opportunity to help develop League leadership that is truly representative of California’s democracy, and to add the richness of diverse perspectives to your advocacy work.

Legislative Interviews 2019-2020

Every year, the LWVC encourages local League members to interview their state legislators. This is an opportunity for legislators to share their priorities with League members and develop an understanding of League positions and priorities. Local League members can discover how state legislative actions are going to impact their communities. In turn the LWVC learns more about legislators and the legislative interests of local Leagues, and gains information useful in planning statewide activities.

Legislative interviews are a powerful tool, increasing League visibility and raising awareness among California’s state representatives of our interest in policies they are considering.

Use the interview to become better acquainted with your legislator. It’s an opportunity to emphasize that while the League never supports or opposes candidates or parties, we are a political organization, and after thorough study and consensus we take positions on issues.

If you have any questions about which legislators represent your League, or which other Leagues are in the same district, please refer to our newly updated [Local League Legislative Directory](#). Please contact Sharon Stone <ssone@lwvc.org> if you find any problems with this cross-referenced list of districts and local Leagues.

LWVC Legislative Interview Kit

General Guidelines

If you have not participated in legislative interviews recently, you may notice a few changes.

- **Local Issues.** The questions leave an opportunity for you to ask about issues of local interest.
- **Multiple League Districts.** In the past local Leagues were assigned to individual legislators and one League was designated to coordinate multiple Leagues in a district. Now Leagues in multiple League districts are asked to coordinate among yourselves. (See below, under The Legislative Interview Team.) If you wish to each schedule separate interviews, perhaps because you have different issues to discuss with a particular legislator, feel free to do so. **NOTE: it is critical that you keep all other Leagues in the district informed if you choose to schedule a separate interview.**
- **Relationship Cultivation.** In the past, we have stressed the importance of speaking personally with the legislator. While it is important to try to get an appointment with the legislator, it can also be extremely difficult for some Leagues. There is also great value in establishing a good working relationship with the local office staff of a legislator. Use your own judgment and use the legislative interview time to cultivate that relationship. Time with your elected legislator is still the first choice. If you do not get through all the questions it's worthwhile to ask if you can meet with staff, either as a continuation of this meeting or at a later time.

Should We Send the Questions Beforehand?

Our recommendation is **not to share the actual interview questions with your legislator in advance.** We believe there's a clear benefit in legislators' unrehearsed responses. The purposes of an in-person interview are to look the representative in the eye, hear their tone of voice, and get a sense of their interest in an issue. In addition, this gives the legislator an opportunity to interact with our local League members and develop or further an ongoing relationship. A preformed statement of positions that could simply be mailed to us fails to accomplish these goals.

Please do feel free to share the issue areas (Voting Rights, Criminal Justice Reform, Climate Change, Land Use, Transportation and Housing) with the representative in advance so that they may broadly prepare themselves for your questions. Tell them that the specific questions asked by your interview committee will come from those issue areas.

The Legislative Interview Team

Advance work by League interview team members is essential to success. This is a short-term project that includes preparation, the interview, and wrap-up. If the interview team includes new League members or those new to the process, the preparation should include some face-to-face time, if at all possible.

LWVC Legislative Interview Kit

Steps in the interview project:

- Planning/assignment of roles and responsibilities
- Briefing to review roles at the interview, and the questions and topics to be covered
- The interview
- Post-interview wrap-up: review of the reports to be sent to the LWVC and presented to your membership. This should happen as soon as possible after the interview.

State legislative districts often encompass more than one local League. Check [Senate Districts](#) and [Assembly Districts](#) online. You may want to arrange to meet along with one or more of the other local Leagues in your legislative district. However, recognizing that Leagues within a given legislative district may have very different issues of interest to members, it is no longer required that local Leagues try to arrange a single meeting within each legislative district.

If you would like to arrange to meet with your legislator in the company of another League or Leagues in your legislative district, the [Local League Legislative Directory](#) lists all of the local Leagues in each district. **Please let us know if you find any problems** with this cross-referenced list of districts and local Leagues.

Interview Etiquette

Be prepared. Study the background materials and the substance of the topics covered in the interview questions.

Follow your assigned role on the interview team.

Opinions expressed should be only those of the League, not of individuals.

Do not overstay your welcome.

Secure the legislator's permission and specific conditions under which you may print any part of the interview in a VOTER or other newsletter.

**No matter how you arrange to interview your legislator,
be sure to keep other Leagues in the district informed of your plans.**

LWVC Legislative Interview Kit

Assembling an Interview Team

Teams of three to five members are ideal. Coordinators should try to include:

- at least one person with a long-term League background
- a member with a history of working with the legislator
- members well versed in the program items covered by the questions
- young members, people of color, and other individuals from underrepresented groups to develop representative League leadership and add diverse perspectives
- new members accompanied by experienced League members

Suggested Roles and Responsibilities:

Team Leader

- **Make the Appointment.** Contact the legislator's local district office. Be persistent. Ask for an hour, but accept less if necessary. If possible, arrange to meet in an office or a home free of distractions. If you cannot get a meeting with the legislator, ask to meet with the district director. They are often extremely well versed about everything going on in a district and in the legislature. Your visit will still be noted and remembered.
- **Confirm.** Send the legislator and staff a letter or email message confirming the appointment, mentioning the topics you will discuss. (**Do not send a copy of the "Background" or the "Legislative Interview Report Form" sections of this kit.**)
- **Set a Team Pre-Meeting.** Brief the members of the team on interview etiquette, the role each member will take in the interview, and their responsibilities as an interview team member.
- **Make Introductions.** Lead off the introductions at the start of the interview and invite League members to introduce themselves.
- **Watch the Clock.** Pace the interview and tactfully keep everyone (including the legislator) on the subject. You will know in advance how much time the legislator has agreed to spend with you, and allot an appropriate amount of time to each question.
- **Send a Thank You.** Write a follow-up thank you after the interview. A thank you note gives you an opportunity to underscore points made at the interview, answer any questions you were not sure about, or send a League publication you may have referred to during the course of the interview.

LWVC Legislative Interview Kit

Researcher

- **Background.** Brief the other members of the interview team on the legislator's relationship with the League and his/her voting record. What are his/her committee assignments and/or leadership positions in the legislature?
- **Check Legislator's League Membership.** Is the legislator a member of your League or another League in the district?
- **Check Bill History.** Check the LWVC [Bill Status Report](#), for information about bill(s) your legislator authored and the League either supported or opposed. You can dig even deeper by checking the legislator's history using [California's legislative information site](#). You may want to take a moment to express the League's appreciation or disappointment about a particular bill on which the state League took a position, and briefly state the League's position.
- **Keep a Digital Research File.** The information you develop should become part of an ongoing file about each legislator.

Background Briefer

- **Team Briefing.** Inform team members as to League positions and history on the interview question topics.
- **Team Discussion.** Lead a discussion with team members about the background information on question topics and the substance of the interview questions.
- **Legislator Briefing.** If your legislator is new or does not know the League well, plan to spend some time talking about the mission of the League and briefly explain the difference between the League's advocacy and education roles. Describe how we take positions on issues.

Recorder

- **Document.**
 - Have the interview questions in front of you.
 - Make note of bills or policy objectives mentioned by the legislator.
 - Make note of requests for information or League materials from the legislator.
 - Write up the material from your notes promptly.
- **Debrief.** Conduct a debriefing with team members shortly after the interview.
 - **Report.** Complete the [online report form](#) by **April 15, 2020**. Responses received by this date will be the most useful for action on League priorities.

LWVC Legislative Interview Kit

Bring with You to the Interview

- Membership brochures from each local League represented. Ask the legislator and staff members present to join!
- [Voter's Edge](#). Tell the legislators about [Voter's Edge](#) and ask them to spread the word. [Order bookmarks](#) to leave behind! Voter's Edge is the League and MapLight's unbiased online elections guide covering federal, state, and local races in California. With over 2 million users in the 2018 gubernatorial election, the site allows candidates to reach voters with direct, unfiltered messages and in-depth information about priorities *at no cost*. Voters access a full, personalized ballot by address, learn about candidates and issues, get clear explanations of ballot measures and find out who's funding them, and check where, when, and how to vote. Check [here](#) for more info and downloadable flyers.
- Appropriate League publications. In addition to the [Action Policies and Procedures](#), and your League's business card, you might include local Facts for Voters or a similar publication.
- Copies of local League newsletters.

Electronic Reporting

Please fill out the online [Legislative Interview Report Form](#). This makes it easier for us to compile and analyze your responses effectively.

Please let us know if you need help using the Survey Monkey online report form.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the interviews, please contact LWVC Vice President for Advocacy and Program Gloria Chun Hoo at ghoo@lwvc.org.

Links to Basic Resources

[District maps](#) from the California Citizens Redistricting Commission

Find your: 1. [Legislators](#) 2. [Assembly Districts](#) 3. [Senate Districts](#)

[Local League Legislative Directory](#). Please let us know if you find any problems with this cross-referenced list of districts and local Leagues, or if you need the password to open the Resource Directory.

[LWVC Bill Status Report](#). Information about bills on which the LWVC has taken a position and recommends action.

[LWVC Advocacy Resource Directory](#). A comprehensive set of resources organized by issue area and type of organization with a short description of the nature of each resource.

LWVC Legislative Interview Kit

[LegInfo](#). California's comprehensive online site for legislation and law. Also see their "[other resources](#)" page for more useful information.

[California Legislative Analyst's Office](#). The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) has provided fiscal and policy advice to the Legislature for 75 years. It is known for its fiscal and programmatic expertise and nonpartisan analyses of the state budget. In addition, the office estimates the fiscal effect on state and local government of all proposed initiatives (prior to circulation) and prepares analyses of all measures that qualify for the statewide ballot.

Legislative Interview Questions

SUMMARY: Short versions of the questions to be posed to your legislator are listed here for your convenience. The full versions of the questions and background information for Questions 1 through 3 may be found on the following pages. Please note - many resources are embedded as hyperlinks in the background narratives. Not all are pulled out and listed as "additional resources."

Question 1: Voting Rights and Criminal Justice Reform

Do you support [ACA 6 \(McCarty\)](#), the Free the Vote Act, which would place an initiative on the November 2020 ballot to amend the California Constitution to restore voting rights to people on parole?

NOTE: *ACA 6 has passed the Assembly on a bipartisan 2/3 vote. It is currently in the state Senate, so please use this question with your state Senator. You can also use it as a vehicle to discuss criminal justice reform and voting rights with Assemblymembers.*

Question 2: Transportation, Housing, Climate Change

Housing, transportation, and emissions reductions to fight climate change are closely linked. California's sprawling suburbs and car commuting culture have been expanding for decades. In order to find affordable, decent housing, many urban workers are forced to endure longer and longer commutes. Two serious consequences are huge carbon emissions from automobiles and the continued loss of arable land to development.

We need to preserve arable lands, forests, grasslands and other lands necessary for both carbon sequestration and food security, and to maintain biodiversity, and yet build more housing to accommodate our growing population.

Given this urgent need, what legislative steps would you take to help us move away from our current transportation and development trends? How do you propose to engage communities to build up not out, and at least develop - if not implement - a public transportation plan?

LWVC Legislative Interview Kit

Question 3: Housing

The housing shortage and associated issues are affecting many areas of everyday life in California, not just transportation and associated emissions, but homelessness, work/life balance and general quality of life for many. Challenges include cost, construction delays (which increase cost), conflicting priorities and basic political will - that of both lawmakers and the community.

As a legislative matter, what can be done to both support those who are trying to build housing, especially housing which is categorized as [deed-restricted affordable](#) or [permanent supportive](#), and encourage or incentivize those still resisting?

Where do you stand on [SB 50](#), a bill [supported](#) by the League of Women Voters of California?

Question 4: Personal Priorities of Legislator

What other major issues do you think the legislature must deal with in 2020? What are your personal priorities? Please make sure to ask this question. It provides us with very valuable insight about your legislator.

Optional Question 5: Local Issues

Local League Question(s) related to issues of particular local concern. This is entirely optional, but you are welcome to include a question related to local issues.

Internal Background Material

The background material provided here is for League members only and should not be sent to the legislators or their staff. If asked for questions or topics in advance, please indicate that you want to talk about issues of importance to the League and to the legislator, and topics will include voting rights, criminal justice reform, climate change, land use, transportation and housing.

Question 1: Voting Rights & Criminal Justice Reform

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NOTE: *ACA 6 has passed the Assembly on a bipartisan 2/3 vote. It is currently in the state Senate, so please use this question with your state Senator. You can also use it as a vehicle to discuss criminal justice reform and voting rights with Assemblymembers.*

LWVC Legislative Interview Kit

Background on Question 1

The League of Women Voters of California Co-Sponsors Free the Vote, ACA 6

The LWVC is co-sponsoring [Free the Vote ACA 6](#) and [AB 646](#) (companion legislation for implementation). Our reasons are articulated in our [support letter](#) and in the [Free the Vote \(FTV\) Community Fact Sheet](#). Materials are also available online at freethevoteca.org. The letter and community fact sheet may be left behind with your legislators after your visits.

ACA 6 was introduced by Assemblymember Kevin McCarty (D-Sacramento) and is co-authored by Assemblymembers Carrillo (D-Los Angeles), Bonta (D-Oakland), Gipson (D-Carson), Gonzalez (D-San Diego), Kalra (D-San Jose), Kamlager-Dove (D-Los Angeles), Stone (D-Monterey Bay), Weber (D-San Diego), Mullin (D-South San Francisco), and Senator Wiener (D-San Francisco).

The History of Felony Disenfranchisement

The racist roots of felony disenfranchisement are well documented in a plethora of publications, including Michelle Alexander's groundbreaking [The New Jim Crow](#), the Brennan Center's report [Jim Crow in New York](#), and in the resources available through the [Sentencing Project](#) and the Brennan Center's [Voting Rights Restoration](#) project.

The League's [support letter](#), along with our [coalition's letter](#), explain the way in which felony disenfranchisement works to disproportionately block Black and Brown voters from California's ballot boxes.

The League and California's Legislative History

The League of Women Voters of California has long advocated to expand the voting rights of people impacted by the criminal justice system. In 1974 we were proponents of Proposition 10 that amended the state constitution to end lifetime disenfranchisement. In 2006 we were a plaintiff in *League of Women Voters v. McPherson*, where a unanimous court held that "imprisoned" meant in a state prison, and that only those people serving time for a felony conviction in a state prison or who are on parole were ineligible to vote. In 2014 the League was a plaintiff in *Scott v. Bowen*, a case restoring voting rights to more than 50,000 Californians sentenced under the Criminal Justice Realignment Act of 2011. Finally, we co-sponsored AB 2466 (Weber, 2016), legislation that codified and fleshed out the court's decision in *Scott v. Bowen*.

Today, Californians may vote if they are in county jail, on probation, or on post-release community supervision, but they are prohibited from voting if they are living in the community on parole. Our state constitution, however, still prohibits otherwise-eligible voters from voting while they are "imprisoned or on parole for the conviction of a felony."

LWVC Legislative Interview Kit

Expanding voting rights any further for Californians with convictions requires a constitutional amendment, which means ACA 6 must be passed by 2/3 of each house before being put on the November 2020 ballot.

Free the Vote in a Nutshell

[ACA 6 \(McCarty\)](#), the Free the Vote Act, would restore voting rights to Californians who are on parole and no longer incarcerated. To pass, it requires a 2/3 vote by the California legislature and then goes on the November 2020 ballot as an initiative for voters to decide. In September 2019 it passed out of the Assembly on a [bipartisan vote](#), and in January 2020 it moves on to the Senate.

Voting to pass ACA 6 through the Assembly Elections Committee, Republican Assemblymember Chad Mayes stated that denying people the right to vote and to have a say over laws, some of which curtail freedoms, is a powerful restriction that the people of California should have the right to decide. His speech, and others, can be found [here](#).

National trend

The movement to expand voting rights for people who were incarcerated has earned bipartisan support across the country, from Florida to Nevada. ACA 6 would bring California into conformance with 16 other states and the District of Columbia that restore voting rights once people are no longer incarcerated. And with the two states that never take away voting rights – Maine and Vermont. The 16 states are: Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Colorado, and Nevada

California law inconsistent

Currently California has a very confusing system where people who are in county jail, or on probation, or on every other form of post-release community supervision are allowed to vote, but people on parole are not. This is unjust, irrational, and creates a chilling effect where people whose lives are touched by the criminal justice system are afraid to register even if they are eligible.

Parole

In California, a person has legally finished their prison sentence the day they are released from prison. Parole is not an extension of a sentence, it is a post-sentence period of community supervision that occurs while people reintegrate into the community. Civic engagement is a critical part of reintegration, helping people to feel connected to their communities. There is evidence to suggest that there is less recidivism among formerly incarcerated people who are allowed to vote and that good mechanisms for reintegration promote public safety. See [The Impact of Felony Disenfranchisement](#) one-pager (this can be left behind with your legislator) distilled from [Guy Padraic Hamilton-Smith and Matt Vogel, The Violence of Voicelessness: The Impact of Felony Disenfranchisement on Recidivism, 22 La Raza L.J. \(2015\)](#).

People on parole are living and working in their communities. They pay taxes, they send

LWVC Legislative Interview Kit

their kids to public schools – fundamental democratic principles demand that they should have a say over policies that impact them. If your child is in school, you should be able to vote for who is on the school board. [Democracy Needs Everyone](#), a recent report by our coalition partners Initiate Justice, surveyed more than 1,000 incarcerated people and people on parole in California. Survey respondents indicated that they want to vote, identified education, public safety, and economic stability as priority issues, believe that restoring the right to vote would improve public safety, and desire to (and do) contribute positively to their community.

Racial justice

The League considers this the new face of suffrage. Because people of color are vastly overrepresented among the population of people who are disenfranchised, we believe that there is a clear racial justice issue. Our Black and Brown communities are overpoliced and there are racial inequities in our criminal justice system. 75% of men leaving California prisons are people of color. As a result, Black and Brown people are being systematically blocked from the voting booth.

International law

Approximately half of all industrialized nations do not have any voter disenfranchisement at all. Of those that do, disenfranchisement is almost always limited to a person's incarceration. In fact, in 2005, the European Court of Human Rights decided that a blanket ban on incarcerated people voting violated the European Convention on Human Rights. [Chung, Jean. *Felony Disenfranchisement: A Primer* \(2019\). Washington, DC: The Sentencing Project.](#)

Terms/ Statements to Avoid:

- **“(Ex-)offenders,” “(ex-)convicts,” “inmates,” “felons/former felons,” or “parolees.”** These terms are dehumanizing and implicitly validate the punitive structure of the criminal legal system. Instead, use people-centered language such as formerly incarcerated people, people on parole, Californians on parole, people with felonies, tax-paying citizens, people coming home, re-entering people, etc.
- **“Second chances,” “served their time,” “paid their debts to society,” etc.** Considering the disproportionate punishment and inadequate resources allocated to communities of color, many formerly incarcerated people were deprived of a “first chance.” These phrases suggest that pairing incarceration or conviction status with disenfranchisement is acceptable for some amount of time. Instead, say “finished their sentences,” “home from prison,” or “released from prison.”

See blog article from The Hill, [Language matters for justice reform](#).

LWVC Legislative Interview Kit

League Position References for Question 1

- [Voting Rights \(state\)](#)
- [Voting Rights \(national\)](#)
- [Criminal Justice Reform \(state\)](#)

Resources for Question 1

Links to resources are incorporated into the background narrative.

Question 2: Transportation, Housing, Climate Change

Housing, transportation, and emissions reductions to fight climate change are closely linked. California's sprawling suburbs and car commuting culture have been expanding for decades. In order to find affordable, decent housing, many urban workers are forced to endure longer and longer commutes. Two serious consequences are huge carbon emissions from automobiles and the continued loss of arable land to development.

We need to preserve arable lands, forests, grasslands and other lands necessary for both carbon sequestration and food security, and to maintain biodiversity, and yet build more housing to accommodate our growing population.

Given this urgent need, what legislative steps would you take to help us move away from our current transportation and development trends? How do you propose to engage communities to build up not out, and at least develop - if not implement - a public transportation plan?

Background on Question 2

The California legislature passed the [Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008](#), Senate Bill (SB) 375, (Chapter 728, Statutes of 2008), which recognizes the critical role of integrated land use, transportation, and housing decisions to meet state climate goals. Sustainable Communities Strategies (SCS) have been developed over the past ten years to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from driving, which can also foster healthier and more equitable and sustainable communities.

The California Air Resources Board is tasked with assessing and reporting progress made toward meeting the regional SB 375 greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. The [2018 report](#) shows we are not on target to meet those goals.

The report shows a pervasive and longstanding disconnect between the factors that shape regional growth and development in California. Transportation investment, regulatory and housing market conditions can be planned and implemented at the local level, the regional level or at the state level. Yet, these different planning efforts are not necessarily done in conjunction with one another or with the state's climate goals.

LWVC Legislative Interview Kit

Transportation

The Transportation sector is the [largest source of emissions](#) in California, totaling 41% of all emissions (the next largest is Industrial, at 23%). Transportation's portion of emissions has also been [increasing as a percentage of the pie](#). This has occurred at least partly because emissions from electricity generation have decreased. We saw a decrease in transportation emissions from 2007, but we are again on the increase, largely from gasoline emissions from passenger vehicles. Of particular note is that emissions from statewide passenger vehicle travel per capita have [increased by more than 10%](#) since 2011. That's the wrong direction.

In general, Californians are continuing to drive more and carpool less. [In 2016](#), 74% of commuters drove alone, 10% were in carpools, and only 5% rode public transit. A notable exception is the Bay Area where not only do a smaller share of residents drive to work alone than in any other region, but from 2005 to 2016 that percentage fell steadily from 69 to 65 percent. Transit ridership has begun to fall across California even though operations funding has increased since 2005.

Commute times are increasing. The average commute time for California is [28.9 minutes](#), which is the sixth longest among U.S. states. Commute times are shifting, but [generally growing](#), both because of longer commute distances and more traffic congestion. Travel times for transit commuters generally increased by more than increases in travel times for auto commuters. Also, with the move of urban workers farther from jobs, transportation times can be grueling because of lack of direct routes. Palmdale, California residents have the longest commute time in the U.S. at [85.4 minutes](#), largely because there is no direct route to jobs in Los Angeles.

We need to make changes in transportation to meet our 2030 target. California has [already met our 2020 climate target](#) due to strong performance in the electricity sector, but to meet future targets we need to reduce emissions from transportation. Specifically, [CARB's 2030 Scoping Plan Update](#) identifies reduction in growth of single-occupancy vehicle travel as necessary to achieve the statewide target of 40 percent below 1990 level emissions by 2030.

Reductions must be made in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMTs) even with electric cars. If the share of new car sales that are Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs) grows nearly 10-fold from today (current projects are growth rates of 3 to 4-fold), California would still need to reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled per capita by 25 percent to achieve the necessary reductions for 2030.

Housing, Jobs, and Commutes

Housing construction and permitting are significantly behind needs. Jobs/housing imbalances are increasing in many regions. Housing cost burdens have increased in every

LWVC Legislative Interview Kit

region.

It's worse for low-income residents. Over 45 percent of all California renters spend more than 35 percent of their income on housing, and longer commutes adds to that burden. A [2015 report](#) by the Brookings Institute looking at changes across the U.S. found that "As poor and minority residents shifted toward suburbs in the 2000s, their proximity to jobs fell more than for non-poor and white residents."

Lower income residents are moving away from the metropolitan areas where jobs concentrate. Figure 9 in the [2018 report on SB 375](#) shows that move-in rates for those earning less than \$25,000 were more concentrated inland, whereas those earning more than \$25,000 were more uniform throughout the state. The report also states that households moving away from high-quality transit areas are more likely to purchase another vehicle and drive more. Further the cars purchased tend to be older and less efficient.

Natural and Working Lands

Natural and working lands are currently an emissions source in California, but by modifying agricultural practices to regenerative processes and other means, these lands – grasslands, agricultural lands, forests, marshlands, and so on – can be a very effective means of capturing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and sequestering it in the natural landscape. This capture and sequestration, sometimes called negative emissions, is essential for us to reach carbon neutrality by 2045 as declared in former Governor Brown's 2018 executive order ([B-55-18](#)).

It is preferable to use natural infrastructure wherever possible. For example using wetlands to protect against storm surges, rather than dikes, restores natural processes and in addition sequesters carbon.

But landscapes cannot change quickly and we're currently moving in the wrong direction. Historic patterns of growth continue to shape the state today, and our suburbs are spreading out even more. Suburbs built since 1980 take up [twice the space per capita](#) relative to suburbs developed from 1946-1979.

From 2000 to 2014, approximately 740 square miles of land were developed in California, which is an area approximately twice the size of the city of San Diego. Most development (75 percent) occurred by 2008, dropping off in the recession. Latest data show development is again on the rise. Most agricultural land was lost in Southern California and the San Joaquin Valley.

Keeping our land for efficient agriculture to provide food security and carbon sequestration, and moving housing to become more dense and close to jobs, is recognized

LWVC Legislative Interview Kit

by SB 375 and other measures to be a prudent direction.

League Position References for Question 2

- [Climate Change \(state\)](#)
- [Land Use \(state\)](#)
- [Housing and Homelessness \(state\)](#)
- [Transportation \(state\)](#)
- [Natural Resources \(national\)](#)

Recommended Resources for Question 2

- [California's 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan](#), California Air Resources Board, November, 2017
- [2018 Progress Report, California Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act](#), California Air Resources Board, November, 2018
- [IPCC Climate Change and Land](#), Special Report, August, 2019

Question 3: Housing

The housing shortage and associated issues are affecting many areas of everyday life in California, not just transportation and associated emissions, but homelessness, work/life balance and general quality of life for many. Challenges include cost, construction delays (which increase cost), conflicting priorities and basic political will - that of both lawmakers and the community.

As a legislative matter, what can be done to both support those who are trying to build housing, especially housing which is categorized as [deed-restricted affordable](#)¹ or [permanent supportive](#), and encourage or incentivize those still resisting?

Where do you stand on [SB 50](#), a bill [supported](#) by the League of Women Voters of California? **Update: SB 50 failed early in the 2020 session. However, we expect another housing production bill this cycle. Please ask your representatives their thoughts about**

¹ [Accessory dwelling units \(ADUs\)](#) have been used by affordable housing organizations to bring housing to low- and very low-income people. Until recently, California law prohibited ADUs from being sold or conveyed separately from the primary residence in which they are co-located, hindering shared ownership models, such as tenancies in common. Recent passage of [AB 587](#) (Friedman), created an exemption in ADU law for qualified nonprofit corporations to sell deed-restricted land with a tenants-in-common agreement to eligible low-income homeowners. In this case, the "deed restriction" must verify that the property receives either government financing or federal tax credits and restrict the property's use to low-income housing. Debbie Arakel, Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity California, commented "With high land costs being one of the greatest barriers to providing affordable homeownership, this bill allows Habitat to better leverage property. We can double our home production in many communities and provide even more homeownership opportunities for low-income families throughout the state."

LWVC Legislative Interview Kit

SB 50 and to describe the contours of a bill that they would support.

Background on Question 3

How did we get here? A history of [racist redlining](#) and single-family, restrictive zoning in California has translated into segregation, dislocation, inequitable development patterns, and lack of affordable housing. California has been underbuilding housing to meet jobs and population growth for the past 50 years. When the average build should have been 210,000 a year the actual was closer to 120,000. In 2010-2017 the actual rate was closer to one new housing unit for every five new households. It is not hard to see the cumulative shortage. With 40 million current residents and a [projected increase](#) to 50 million by 2050, we suffer from [a deficit of 3.5 million homes](#).

In order to begin to deal with the housing shortage, and, more specifically, with the affordable housing crisis, many refer to the “3 Ps”: Protection, Preservation and Production.

Protection

Protection can refer to any of the various means to prevent low income people from being further impacted. This includes rent control/stabilization measures of all kinds including the rent-cap protections in [AB 1482](#), a recently passed bill [supported](#) by the state League. It includes no-fault eviction protections and measures that encourage landlords to accept federal housing vouchers (Section 8) and local housing supplements. Full rent control is controversial. Under current Costa-Hawkins provisions it only covers buildings built before 1995 and earlier for some jurisdictions due to local regulations. Protections in AB 1482 are more generous than most rent control laws, cover any buildings more than 15 years old and expires in 2030.

Preservation

Preservation refers to various means to protect the supply of non-subsidized low income housing currently on the market. No fault eviction protections are one way to do that because, under the Costa-Hawkins law, a rent control unit can move to current market rate upon vacancy. This is called vacancy decontrol and efforts to reverse it have failed legislatively. Other means are measures that protect some currently affordable areas from development incentives to prevent displacement and redevelopment at market rates. New legislation in this area will probably be in play by the time of some interviews.

Production

This is currently the most discussed issue. Building new units is expensive. California land, especially in jobs rich areas, is expensive. Construction is expensive. Both labor and materials are in great demand. Building subsidized units involves government funding and the need to pay prevailing wage. Delays caused by local regulations and community objections add to the cost. The past few years of fire have only added to the demand for

LWVC Legislative Interview Kit

both materials and labor. It is not unusual for new family units in jobs rich neighborhoods to cost out at \$500,000 to \$700,000 a unit or more.

LITC (Low Income Tax Credits) are the main way the state helps subsidize low income housing but these are limited, usually require substantial up front investment before applying, and often have a waiting list. An eight month wait for the next funding cycle adds to carrying costs. Currently LITCs fund about ten new units each year.

The low income housing shortage is real. Currently about one fourth of low income households, those earning less than 50% of average median income for their area, live in subsidized housing and pay about 30% of their income for housing. The rest are at the mercy of the market and many pay 50-60% and more in rent, leaving little for food, utilities, healthcare, transportation and normal living expenses.

Many are trying ways (container housing, 3-D printing, various forms of prefabrication) to lower cost but none have successfully been brought to scale so far.

SB 50 - The MORE Homes Act

[SB 50](#), a bill [supported](#) by the League and currently making its way through the legislature, aims to tackle the housing crisis through incentivizing dense construction near jobs and transit. This strategy also mitigates against climate change because reduced drive-time translates to reduced automobile emissions - the primary source of greenhouse gas emissions in California. The League is advocating that anticipated amendments to SB 50 work to maximize affordable housing, minimize displacement, and ensure that Californians who are most at risk reap its benefits.

The bill was introduced by Senator Weiner and is currently co-authored by Senators Caballero, Hueso, McGuire, Moorlach, Skinner, and Stone and by Assemblymembers Chu, Diep, Fong, Kalra, Kiley, Low, McCarty, Robert Rivas, Ting, and Wick.

When you speak to your representative, please ask them where they stand on SB 50.

Update: SB 50 failed early in the 2020 session. However, we expect another housing production bill this cycle. Please ask your representatives their thoughts about SB 50 and to describe the contours of a bill that they would support.

League Position References for Question 3

- [Housing and Homelessness \(state\)](#)
- [Equality of Opportunity: Fair Housing \(national\)](#)
- [Meeting Basic Human Needs: Housing Supply \(national\)](#)

LWVC Legislative Interview Kit

Recommended Resources for Question 3

- [LAO report](#) on housing costs.
- **Upzoning Debate**
 1. Yonah Freemark, “[Upzoning Chicago: Impacts of a Zoning Reform on Property Values and Housing Construction](#),” Urban Affairs Review. Published January 29, 2019. (Study on zoning changes finds “short-term, local-level impacts of upzoning are higher property prices but no additional new housing construction.”) See Richard Florida, “[Does Upzoning Boost the Housing Supply and Lower Prices? Maybe Not](#),” CityLab. January 31, 2019. (Synthesizes findings of the study.)
 2. Yonah Freemark’s [warning](#) not to use his study to support opposition to SB 50 (Weiner) in which he states “I have repeatedly and publicly cautioned that results from Chicago should not be interpreted as reflecting what may or may not occur if SB 50 were to pass.... I wanted to clear the air. I’ll do so in three ways: One, I’ll describe specific instances in which my work has been misinterpreted, and explain why. Two, I’ll point to aspects in the legislation in California that suggest it may produce different outcomes than the upzoning in Chicago – particularly because it includes vital components designed to preserve affordability. And three, I’ll point to the kind of future research needed to understand such policies.
- [The Urban Displacement Project](#), out of the University of California at Berkeley, has authored several policy briefs relevant to SB 50 and housing more broadly. Particularly useful are:
 - [Upzoning California: What are the Implications of SB 50 for Bay Area Neighborhoods?](#)
 - [Upzoning Under SB 50: The Influence of Local Conditions on the Potential for New Supply](#)
 - [Residential Impact Fees in California](#)