



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®] OF MONTEREY COUNTY "THE VOTER" NEWSLETTER

"Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy" / May 2024, Volume 96, Number 8

Wednesday, May 8th, 2024

In-Person Annual Membership Meeting: Presentation "Monterey County Grand Jury"

Guest Speakers **Tom M. Mastre** and **Maria A. Y. Garcia** will discuss the workings of the **Monterey County Civil Grand Jury**. Responsibilities of Civil Grand Juries include examining all aspects of county government, all municipalities, and special districts, to ensure that the County is being governed honestly and efficiently and that County funds are being handled appropriately.



The Monterey County Civil Grand Jury investigates and reports on the operations of local government, including the **County, Cities** and the numerous **Special Districts** that serve its residents. It undertakes investigations on its own initiative, but also encourages residents to submit written complaints for suggested investigations.



After retiring in 2019 **Tom Mastre** volunteered for the **2020–2021 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury**. Mastre says it was an unusual Jury, as it was during COVID lockdown so all meetings, interviews and investigative activity had to be conducted via ZOOM. He has been active in the **Civil Grand Jury Association of Monterey County**, and is its current **President**. He also encourages anyone interested in local government to **apply to become a member of the Civil Grand Jury**.

Maria Garcia, a Marina resident, served on the **2019-2020** and **2020-2021 Civil Grand Juries**, and was appointed **Foreperson** during both terms. *(continued on page 2)*

Wednesday, May 8th:

Unitarian Universalist Church <http://uucmp.org>
490 Aguajito Road / Carmel CA 93923 (831) 624-7404

11am **Doors Open** / 11:15 **Registration** / 11:45 to 12:15
Annual Meeting / 12:15 **Buffet Luncheon** (optional) /
12:30 **Guest Speakers** / 1:30pm **Adjournment**

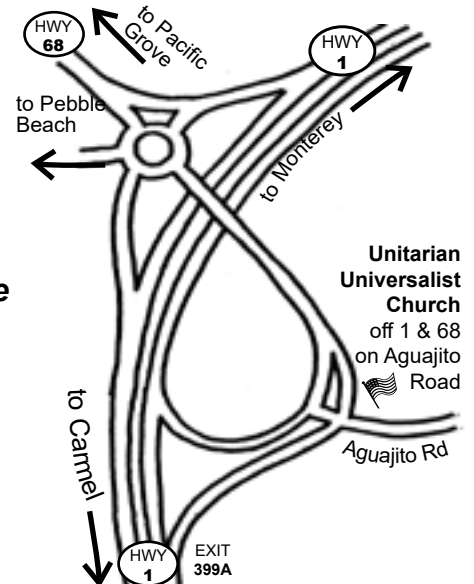
Optional lunch is \$25 per person: main course, salad, beverages, & dessert by **International Cuisine, Pacific Grove**

Reservations for lunch are required
and can be made up to **Monday, May 6th**

(Bev Bean: phone 236-1661 or e-mail beverlygb@gmail.com)

Pay at the door for lunch; meeting/presentation is **FREE**.

Reminder to Members: Reservations are a commitment to the caterer with a minimum number of attendees, and cannot be cancelled by the League after May 6th.





(continued from page 1)

Garcia was instrumental in bringing back the **Monterey County Chapter of the Civil Grand Jury Association.**

She worked for the **University Corporation**, an auxiliary organization of **CSUMB**, for nearly 15 years before taking a pause in her career to spend more time with her parents. **Marilyn Maxner**

★ PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE MAY 2024 ★

In one of my earlier messages as **LWVMC President**, I referred to **Alexis de Tocqueville**, and it is to his insights that my thoughts return today, as I write a final letter to you.

Tocqueville understood that beyond formal mechanisms of government, it is the *spirit of the American people*, and in particular, their *willingness to collaborate with one another* through associations, that constitutes the connective tissue of this body politic. With its century-long commitment to principle over partisanship and reason over rancor, the League occupies an especially constructive position in the political discourse.

Fellow League members, it is through you and like-minded community members that American democracy lives. I will always be grateful for the opportunity you have given me to appreciate your altruism, expertise and thoughtful engagement up close.

As **Voter** readers you know that our League is always busy. At our March meeting, **Vinz Koller** reviewed demographic facts about **voter registration and turnout** in Monterey County. The takeaway: there's much to be done, even with respect to relatively high-turnout groups such as those over age 65.

At our April meeting, **Arash Sayadi** and **Steve Chessin** explained the mechanics of **Rank Choice Voting (RCV)**, its potential for improving voter participation and satisfaction, and its promise for moving us towards less polarized elections. RCV is being put into place in local elections across California and the nation, and may be a structural



Outgoing President Marianne Gawain

reform to be considered for Monterey County.

This spring we also heard from tomorrow's voters, the high school students who submitted art to our League's poster contest. We can benefit by tapping into their idealism and enthusiasm as we navigate this presidential election year. We'll need energy to stay on task: in addition to voter service work, we have much to tackle in policy-related advocacy, such as making the case for **Sheriff Oversight** and for meaningful **Climate Action Plans**.

This space is too limited for me to properly thank all of you for three years of generous encouragement, constructive suggestions, and forbearance of my limitations. Mentors and cheerleaders, you understood that in supporting my on-the-job learning, you were helping our League advance its mission of defending democracy and empowering voters.



Soon a new leadership team, highly experienced and full of fresh energy and ideas, takes the reins as LWVMC pursues its priorities. While we can acknowledge past and present frustrations—we certainly don't attain every voter service or advocacy goal—let's keep looking ahead to new possibilities. And finally, when friends and acquaintances rue the dysfunction and dangers that threaten our nation's political life, let's give them the option of joining our League's positive project.

**Many Thanks and Warmest Regards,
Marianne Gawain**

UPDATE: MONTEREY COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT OVERSIGHT

The LWVMC has been working with a local coalition to support establishment of oversight of the Sheriff's Department including Monterey County Jail, through an Inspector General and Community Oversight Board. We believe such oversight would help the Sheriff, the Board of Supervisors, and the community understand where problems may exist so that solutions can be proposed earlier rather than later.



A better statistic would be how many were processed through the jail during a year, rather than how many were there on one particular day. But crucial data to understand what is happening at the county jail is missing, spread out among different agencies and antiquated data bases, hidden in spreadsheets, and difficult to find, another reason to advocate for community oversight.

Four coalition members, including our **President Marianne Gawain**, recently met with newly elected **Supervisor Kate Daniels** on the subject. The coalition will meet again with **Sheriff Nieto** on the earliest available date, **Monday, June 10**. Our group finally received the materials from the public records request we made months ago. To put the issue of incarceration and oversight into perspective:

The United States is home to the largest number of prisoners worldwide (1.8 million) and one of the highest ratios, 531 per 100,000 population. European countries average 117 incarcerated people per 100,000. California, the most populous state, with an incarceration ratio of 250 per 100,000 population, has the second highest number of incarcerated people in the country.

County jail populations in general dropped during the pandemic. The Monterey County Jail held 1,150 inmates in 2012, expanded its capacity to 1,401 in 2022, but in mid-April 2024 had only 894. The majority of inmates are poor, people of color, and may have untreated addiction or mental health issues. These individuals have been booked, but may not have gone to trial nor been convicted of any crime. Time in jail means they can't go to work, school, or support their families. The effect of incarceration as a deterrent to crime is minimal at best (<https://nicic.gov/weblink/prison-paradox-more-incarceration-will-not-make-us-safer-2017>).

A major issue is deaths in the jail. *CalMatters* reports that more people are dying in California jails than before the pandemic, despite our prison population being lower than at any point in the last two decades. *KSBW* reported recently on at least 28 in-custody deaths at Monterey Jail since the Hernandez settlement in 2015.

The major causes of jail death statewide are natural causes and suicide, followed by accidents, which includes overdoses, increasingly more often related to fentanyl. Small quantities of this highly deadly drug can easily find its way into jail, even in letters dipped in diluted solution. Deputies and jail contractors have also been arrested for smuggling in drugs.

Experts say instituting local oversight boards would help. But elected County Sheriffs, including our **Monterey County Sheriff, Tina Nieto**, say additional oversight is unnecessary. However, the organization charged with overseeing day-to-day operations of California's jails is the **Board of State and Community Corrections**. The **Legislative Analyst's Office** found in 2021 that the Board's effectiveness is hard to judge because it's unclear what the board's mission is. The **State Auditor's Office** said the Board's jail regulations were inconsistent and its audit answers were "deficient or misleading." So much for current oversight!

In addition, the 2022-23 Monterey County Grand Jury report "Monterey County Coroner's Report: Matter of Life and Death," (<https://www.monterey.courts.ca.gov/general-information/>)

grand-jury/grand-jury-reports) made nine findings and eight recommendations regarding the coroner's office, which is part of the sheriff's department. The Sheriff responded that a number of the recommendations had been implemented, but disagreed with others, and wrote that some needed further analysis.

Cost is often cited as a reason not to have community oversight. But according to records, the County paid \$1.7 million in claims and employee lawsuits in 2022-23 alone. And the five families of people who died in Monterey County Jail between

2013 and 2019 sued and won more than \$9 million in total judgments and settlements. Preliminary examination of the documents recently turned over to the coalition indicates that the payouts were more expensive than oversight would have been, and might well have nipped the problems in the bud.

If you have an interest in criminal justice reform at the local level, please contact Sharon Miller or Marianne Gawain. There is a lot of work to do for LWVMC to stay on top of these important concerns!

Sharon Miller and Marianne Gawain



2024 LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEWS: REPRESENTATIVE DAWN ADDIS



Each year, local chapters support the **League of Women Voters California** by interviewing state legislators to gather information useful in setting priorities and action plans. This March, members of our and the **Santa Cruz League**, led by members of **LWV San Luis Obispo**, interviewed **Assemblymember Dawn Addis**. The following summarizes her responses to our questions.



response to the overturn of provisions in **Monterey County's Measure Z**, and to ban toxic chemicals in air fresheners.

How do we make substantial progress to increase housing and reduce homelessness? In the Coastal Zone housing is complicated by the need to build safely. Addis highlighted the needs of adults over 50, where we need to provide funding for care as well as units, and students. She noted that

What can we learn about open meetings from experience during the pandemic? Addis sees **remote access to public meetings** as having had a very positive impact on participation. She has specifically observed increased participation by caregivers and people with disabilities, as well as by elected officials.

parking lot space has been allocated for students living in their cars at Cuesta College.

What legislation would you support to mitigate health impacts of climate change? Addis said that this issue is urgent and noted that the legislature has done a lot of work on fire and flood prevention and mitigation. She is Chair of the **Central Coast Caucus**, which includes legislators from Ventura to Santa Cruz, who are advocating for funds to prevent and mitigate climate change. They recognize the negative health effects from wildfires on outdoor workers and other residents. Addis will introduce legislation to give counties the right to regulate oil and gas production, in

Do you support NOAA's most recent boundaries for the Chumash Marine Reserve without the carve out for offshore wind development?

The Assemblymember submitted a letter to **NOAA** supporting the largest boundaries for the sanctuary. The federal government, rather than the state has regulatory jurisdiction for offshore wind development.

What are your personal priorities? Addis was a **special education teacher** so education is a priority. She is especially concerned about needs of English learners, and also about community college access for students with disabilities. She would like to make loans available to community college students where necessary.

Tama Olver



LWVMC MEMBER PROFILE: WHITNEY STEWART GRAVEL



Now that she's retired from her long career, is widowed and has moved to **Hacienda Carmel**, **Whitney Stewart Gravel** says she has the time to become more active in LWVMC. She's recently been a **Board Member at Large** and soon will become **Co-Chair for Publicity and Luncheon Management** with **Beverly Bean**.



One of the things Senator Mike Gravel was best known for was officially releasing the **"top secret" Pentagon Papers** and facilitating their publication. As Whitney recalls, the first time he told the complete story of how **Daniel Ellsberg** gave a copy of the papers to a **Washington Post** editor, who secretly delivered them to Mike, was during his talk at a **Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula**

Whitney and her husband, former two-term **Alaska Senator Mike Gravel**, first came to this area from the East Coast in the late 1980's. He was retired at the time and Whitney served as **Dean of Admission for Student Affairs** at what was then called the **Monterey Institute of International Studies**, a position she held for eight years. *"Most of my professional life has been in higher education,"* she explains.

service. Our League chapter holds its luncheons in UUCMP's building.

In addition to being an exhaustive history about the Vietnam War era, the Papers revealed that multiple Presidential administrations continued to send American soldiers to fight in a war that could not be won and had systematically lied, not only to the public, but also to Congress. Although Ellsberg hoped Mike would read the Papers during his filibuster against the military draft, Mike entered them into the **Congressional Record**.



Before coming to Monterey, Whitney spent eight years in administration at **American University** in Washington, DC. *"I was an assistant to the Dean in the School of Government and Public Administration,"*

she recalls. *"That provided me with free tuition to get my **master's degree in counseling**. Then I became **Director of Student Affairs** at AU. A new law required access to higher education for students with disabilities. I loved learning from students what services and classroom adaptations would facilitate their studies. It felt like promoting civil rights for people who'd been denied those rights."*

Mike believed in government transparency and an informed citizenry, so he then went to every major publishing house. None were willing to publish the Papers for fear that the **Nixon White House** and his **Justice Department** would go after them, as they had gone after the newspapers that had received them from Ellsberg and printed summary articles. Whitney recalls him saying. *"The only publisher willing to take the risk was **Beacon House**, the publishing arm of the UU Church. Some anonymous Unitarian put up half a million dollars to publish the **Pentagon Papers**."*

After her time at MIIS, Whitney says, *"We moved back to Washington, DC. A former student offered me a marketing job at a real estate development company. It gave me the flexibility to travel monthly to New York to see my mother, who needed my assistance. Mike was retired from regular employment, but he spent the last 30 years of his life promoting direct democracy."*

Although political life hasn't been Whitney's main career focus, one of the first jobs she had after graduating from college and before she met Mike was as an **assistant to New York Senator Jacob Javits**



(continued on page 6)

in Washington, DC. Prior to that, she'd had a job with the **Massachusetts Governor's Office** in Boston. "I was always interested in public policy," she explains.

The Gravels planned to move back to Monterey for life in retirement after Whitney's real estate marketing job in Washington ended, but they soon were waylaid. "Our daughter was going through a divorce," Whitney recalls, "and she asked us to help with her two young daughters." So Whitney and Mike spent the following eight years living in **Burlingame**, where they both enjoyed having so much time with their daughter and granddaughters.

When the children were older and independent, the Gravels moved back to Monterey to start the retirement life they'd long envisioned. "We were thrilled to come back here about eight years ago,"

Whitney says. "My focus initially was on book clubs, a hiking group, joining the **Democratic Women of Monterey County** and reestablishing a life here." And because Mike did a lot of writing, she did a lot of editing for him.



Since Mike also needed Whitney to be there for him during his final years, she didn't become active in our League until after his death in June of 2021, but she's enthusiastic about its activities and goals.

Among the League's goals that Whitney Stewart Gravel finds particularly important are issues impacting voter education, access and turnout. She plans to continue working at the polls and being involved with civic issues, both locally and nationally.

Nancy Baker Jacobs

★★★ **LWVMC ART CONTEST AWARDS CEREMONY** ★★★



Student Art Contest Participants: Zoey MacNeil, Jovany Razo, Diego Sanchez, Lily Gill, Sophia Kemmerly, Jasmin Saldana, Cesar Escobar, Jaime Isidro



GRAND PRIZE
art: **Jasmin Saldana**

On April 9 at the **Salinas Library, El Gabilan Branch**, our League held an Awards Ceremony for the "**Your Vote is Your Voice: Register and Vote**" poster contest, attended by families and friends of the student winner. We thank volunteer photographer, **Jerry Loomis** for taking photos at the event (used in this article with permission).

The two **Grand Prize winners** and six of the nine **Merit Award winners** present were honored. Three Merit Award winners were honored in absentia.



GRAND PRIZE
art: **Diego Suarez**



Art Contest Organizers & Judges: Tama Olver, Olivia Mandilk, Shelley Sweet, Mary Helen Gallegos (Judge), Gina Martínez (Judge), Marianne Gawain, and Stacey Gregory

The students, many of whom dressed up especially for the occasion, had their family members, friends, and teachers in the audience with around 30 people to cheer them on.

League President Marianne Gawain thanked the many people who made the contest possible—students, art teachers, jurors, the display libraries, and the **LWVMC Joy Osborne Fund**.

Guest of Honor, Gina Martinez, Monterey County Registrar of Voters, spoke about the importance of voting, encouraging students to preregister and family and friends to register and **vote!** Gina presented the student artists with their certificates and Marianne handed out the prize money. Some students gave explanations of their work, how they created their poster, or what it meant:

Grand Prize Winner Diego Sanchez, said he and his brother often talked about how important it is for voters to be educated. **Grand Prize Winner**



Jasmin Saldana said she chose slightly softened colors, rather than classic red and blue, because she thought that would help her poster have wide appeal.

MERIT AWARD WINNER Jovany Razo, and his "Your Vote is Your Voice" poster

Merit Award Winners also had their say: **Zoey McNeil** said she decided to use a comic-influenced style because it would be eye-catching and draw people in. **Lily Gill** said that the origins of the League of Women Voters inspired her to focus on women. **Cesar Escobar** explained his striking color scheme: the red and blue hands were for



the [political] parties, the purple background represented a mix, while the yellow lines were meant to convey rays of hope. **Sophia Kemmerly** (photo left) said the fists in her poster were meant to represent "breaking the glass ceiling."

Later Marianne commented on Diego

Sanchez's story: "Two teen brothers talking about the importance of an educated electorate? Now that is cool."

While refreshments were served, students had a chance to mingle and preregister to vote. Gina and **Mary Helen Gallegos, Elections Program Manager**, staffed a Voter Information table.

After the event, **Monterey County Elections staff** reported that they received at least five new voter registrations at the event including one from a parent of an award recipient! **Tama Olver** noted that "The art is already inspiring more participation in democracy and its impact has only just begun."

Shelley Sweet

**We Remember
Mary Margaret DeBartolo**

We learned belatedly that our former LWVMC Member Mary Margaret passed away in April 2023.



Between May 2009 and November 2014, Mary Margaret worked the League polling places for seven elections. She was described as "soft-spoken, polite, and patient" on Legacy.com. She was that, and just the right person to greet voters and help them cast their ballots!

Dennis Mar

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

>Welcome New Members!

Laura Abihider

Madeline Bolander (Student)

Lucy Moore

Pamela Swenson

Change of Address?

Send your contact updates to me.

Donate to our General or Scholarship Fund, or Give a Friend a Gift Membership!

Contact: Janet Brennan

brennan_janet@comcast.net

(831) 659-2090



Join the League of Women Voters of Monterey County



FREE STUDENT MEMBERSHIP

Students may join LWVMryCo via the website without paying membership fees.

New Members Welcome!

Any person age 16 or older may be a member.

Use the form below or contact:

LWVMC Membership Director

Mail to LWVMryCo PO Box 1995

Monterey, CA 93942

Checks payable to LWVMC or online with credit card or PayPal

Membership Levels

- \$250+ **Carrie Chapman Catt**
- \$200 **Sojourner Truth**
- \$150 **Elizabeth Cady Stanton**
- \$100 **Susan B. Anthony**
- \$ 95 **Household (2 persons, 1 address)**
- \$ 65 **Single membership**
- (free) **Student (16-24 years, enrolled in a diploma or degree program)**

Name(s)

Address

City

State

Zip Code

Phone

e-mail

Please do NOT publish my address, phone number or email in The Voter newsletter

Florence Curlee Scholarships

are available to pay household or single membership fees. Contact:

Janet Brennan, Brennan_Janet@comcast.net

Membership dues & contributions to LWVMryCo are not tax deductible, nor are donations to the Florence Curlee Scholarship Fund.

However, donations to the League of Women Voters of California Local Impact Fund (LWVCLIF)

(formerly LWVC Education Fund)

are tax deductible,

but please continue to make the donations payable to LWVCEF.

BE ONE OF OUR DELEGATES AT THE 2024 NATIONAL CONVENTION, WASHINGTON DC



The National Convention 2024 will take place June 27-June 30 at the Washington Hilton.



In-person and virtual delegates will have opportunities to participate in the **Convention Plenary** and vote on the League's **2024 – 2026 Program, Budget, LWVUS Board of Directors and Nominating Committee, bylaws and amendments.** Other activities include a **pre-Convention Lobby Day** on Thursday (27th), a **reception and dinner** on Saturday night (29th) showcasing local DC culture, and a **variety of breakout sessions.**

Our **LWVMC** can offer **funding to partially offset costs of travel and attendance.** For further information on this, or for personal details on the Convention experience, advice and encouragement, contact: **Marilyn Maxner, Marianne Gawain, or Dennis Mar.**

Registration is now open for in-person and virtual attendance at tinyurl.com/LWVUSconvention.



League of Women Voters of Monterey County



Office Mariposa Hall, 801 Lighthouse Avenue (corner of Irving), New Monterey CA 93940

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Videographer

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"The Voter" Biographer

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LWVMryCo The VOTER

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LWVMryCo Calendar 2024



★ **Did You Get Your CALL to the 99th ANNUAL MEETING?** ★

By now all members should have received their
 Agenda for the Wednesday May 8th meeting by mail.

Please bring them with you to the meeting!

MAY

Board Zoom Meeting
Monday, May 6th, 11:30am
 contact: Marianne Gawain

In-Person Annual Membership Meeting
Wednesday, May 8th, 12 noon
"Monterey County Grand Jury"
Guest Presenters:
Tom Mastre and Maria Garcia
 LWV Art Contest posters to be on Display
 contact: Marianne Gawain

Natural Resources Zoom Meeting
Thursday, May 9th, 12 noon
 contact: George Riley

JUNE / JULY /

AUGUST SUMMER BREAK

No Board, General, or Committee Meetings
 except **Natural Resources** (see below),
 or **Voter Newsletter**

Natural Resources Committee
Zoom Meetings
Thursday, June 13th
 and **Thursday, July 11th, 12 noon**

No Committee Meeting in August
Resume September
 contact: George Riley

SEPTEMBER

Board Zoom Meeting
Monday, September 2nd, 11:30am
 contact: Marianne Gawain

Natural Resources Zoom Meeting
Thursday, September 19th, 12 noon
 contact: George Riley