

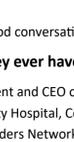
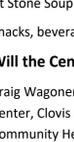
The Fresno Voter

Volume 67.3

March Calendar of upcoming events:



LWVF March Members' Meeting Featuring:



Craig Wagoner & Dr. José Barral Sánchez

Thursday, March 12, 5:30 pm

At Stone Soup

Snacks, beverages, & good conversation

Will the Central Valley ever have enough healthcare professionals?

Craig Wagoner is President and CEO of Community Health System which includes Community Regional Medical Center, Clovis Community Hospital, Community Behavioral Health Center, and Fresno Heart Hospitals, as well as Community Health Providers Network and Community Health Network, an HMO. After decades of healthcare management experience including 20 years in the Community Health System, Craig became CEO in December, 2024.

Dr. José Barral Sánchez is Vice Dean of the UCSF Medical Education program. For over 50 years, the UCSF has been associated with the Community Healthcare System. With the goals of increasing the number of healthcare professionals in the valley and providing top quality healthcare to underserved communities, UCSF Fresno offers medical residency programs, fellowships and 3rd year medical student training. Dr. Barral Sánchez is an experienced educator, researcher, and leader whose task is the expansion of the UCSF Fresno campus and its partnership with UC Merced.

ATTENTION VOTER READERS:

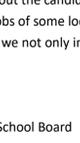
This issue represents the last of our printed editions of the Voter. It has been an amazing run.

But like newspapers and other area League newsletters, we are going digital— starting with the April edition.

If you have not been receiving routine email messages from us, please update your email address by sending a message to our email address: info.lwvfresno@gmail.com or leaving a message (clear and slow) on our phone 559-226VOTE.

Co-President's Message

by Robin Chiero



On February 14, the League of Women Voters celebrated its 106th birthday. "We've defended democracy for 106 years, and we're not stopping now." That includes Getting Out The Vote for the Primary Election this coming June 2. When we choose our leaders by voting, we're choosing the people who will make decisions that shape the direction of our country and our communities. Although many don't think primary elections are particularly important, they are worth our efforts to encourage high voter turnout.

In California, primary elections follow the *Top Two Candidates Open Primary Act*. The following offices, previously known as *partisan*, are now known as *voter-nominated*: State constitutional offices, State legislative offices, U.S. Senate, and U.S. congressional offices. All candidates for each of these offices are listed on one ballot (rather than separate ballots by political party), and the top two vote-getters in the primary election move on to the general election regardless of political party and whether one received more than 50% of the vote. Consequently, the top two candidates could potentially be from the same political party in the November election.

Many of the races in primary elections are for local offices. There is a great deal of attention paid to candidates for state and national offices, but voters are sometimes unaware of the responsibilities of those holding local offices, the decisions they make, and the impact those decisions have. A greater understanding of the jobs of our local elected officials helps voters make informed decisions about the candidates who will be making those decisions. Below are some resources for more information on the jobs of some local officials and on candidates running for office. By taking advantage of these and other resources, we not only inform our own decisions but can also help increase voter engagement in this important election.

Local Resources and more information:

"Why Voting Local Matters" for City Council, Mayor, and School Board

<https://www.lwv.org/blog/voting-local-matters-why-vote-city-council>

Information specific to what is on your ballot (<https://www.vote411.org/>)

Fresnoland (<https://fresnoland.org/>)

GVWire (<https://gvwire.com/>)

Fresno Bee (<https://www.fresnobee.com/>)

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Transportation Report

by Kay Bertken



The League is now one of the sponsors of a citizen-led signature gathering effort to place a renewal of the County's ½ cent transportation tax (currently known as "Measure C") on the ballot in November. If you have been following our reports in The Voter and our weekly blasts, you know that we have been participating in a coalition of community groups to gather community ideas and incorporate them into a ballot measure to renew the transportation sales tax.

That half-cent tax has served the county well, funding important transportation infrastructure since 1986, when our League first participated in its passage.

Under ordinary circumstances, the Fresno County Board of Supervisors would put the renewal measure on the ballot. Members of the Fresno County Council of Governments (COG) sent the transportation measure, as advanced and approved by the citizens' steering committee (of which we were part), in December. The newly drafted measure should have been placed on the ballot by the Supervisors, but their preference for less public transportation funding and more for regional highway projects did not align with community preferences or with the citizens' steering committee's proposal.

The renewal of this transportation measure in November now depends on a challenging effort to gather 35,000 signatures by the first week in April.

You can help by getting the signatures of neighbors and friends. The League has petitions available. You can find out more about the People's Plan for Better Roads and Safe Streets at the campaign website.

Action Item: <https://www.movingfresnoforward.com>

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Health Care

by Richard Bertken M.D.



The projected reduction in federal funding of Medicaid and Medicare will approach one trillion dollars over the next decade. How can we maintain some standard of healthcare across our medically needy population? The view of the current majority in Congress is this: eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse (WFA). By this standard, we should be looking at the WFA in our total healthcare system, which costs 30% to 50% more than other high-rent countries.

The overhead in Medicaid is lower than in our other health plans, but Medicaid patients are sicker, and the program is strained by its obligation to provide long-term care. About two-thirds of long-term care in the US is paid for by Medicaid. Our legislators on both sides of the aisle must frequently deal with these numbers. They must know that cutting Medicaid radically as they are doing is a dangerous gamble, both politically and for the long-term health of our country.

Some influential conservative congressmen have voiced their belief that the underlying problem with Medicaid is undue medical costs, perhaps disengaging from the WFA mantra. Are these voices saying, "We think if we cut federal Medicaid payments to states, we can get them to operate more efficiently?" That would be a classic business approach. It would also credit these voices with caring a bit about sustaining quality in Medicaid services. However, fifty states have been working on this issue for decades without discovering a formula for stretching dollars. The congressional majority is really saying that sustaining large tax cuts for the rich and corporations remains it's priority.

Medicaid cuts require states to backfill support for their existing poverty health programs. Most states are not prepared for the costs required to implement the new Medicaid eligibility requirements, let alone the additional funding needed to keep their Medicaid programs afloat. Most states are already configuring budgets for 2027. Most states are finding that, right now, they do not have sufficient tax income to sustain current services. In Colorado, for example, state Medicaid officials, notably not politicians or executives, are already facing the painful task of informing caregivers for the elderly or disabled that their modest incomes will be reduced.

On the Fourth of July 2025, Congress passed, along with the One Big Beautiful Bill, the Working Families Tax Cuts Act. Included in this Act was the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP), which provided \$ 10 billion annually for 5 years to help states improve rural healthcare. Of note: rural areas are solidly conservative even in solidly blue states and would be particularly devastated by Medicaid underfunding.

The RHTP will likely only partially offset the Medicaid loss in rural areas, but it has already secured funding in all 50 states. Every state gets 100 million dollars yearly for just being a US state, but by proposing specific, competitive, "innovative approaches" to rural healthcare delivery and having a large rural population, they may receive up to 280 million.

Proposals from all states were evaluated and awarded by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services at the end of 2025. California was among the top beneficiaries, getting 233 million. Texas and Alaska were at the top, with 281 million and 272 million, respectively. The proposals generally envisioned improved broadband access, expanded telehealth services, improved coordination with existing healthcare centers, medical residencies, and other training programs, transportation networks, maternal health centers, and active recruitment of healthcare talent.

Housing

by Marianne Kast



Among the myriad legislative attempts to ease California's impossible housing issues, a 2019 piece of legislation recently piqued my interest. AB 1486, the Surplus Land Act, aims to make locally owned public land that is no longer needed for government purposes available for building affordable homes. Here are three local examples of how this works.

In the City of Fresno, an 8-story, 160-unit mixed-use affordable housing development is planned for designated Surplus Land at 815 Fulton St., just east of Chukchansi Park. The project will include a mix of studios, 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units, with 64 designated as affordable. The Fresno City Council recently approved this rework of a project that has been talked about for over a decade at that site.

If you've been downtown lately, you've likely noticed the road construction on Tuolumne St between Van Ness and Fulton Streets. There, a 27,000 sq. ft. chunk of property was declared Surplus Land and is being redeveloped as part of infrastructure improvements ahead of the Housing Authorities' development of the former CVS store and neighboring parcels. A multi-story, multi-building, 400+ unit project is planned there. The land was formerly part of a traffic diversion system for Fulton Street, which was closed to vehicular traffic.

The former Clarion Hotel, on Blackstone Ave. between Dakota and Ashland, was acquired by the City with State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds during the pandemic. It was used as a homeless shelter and bridge housing site, operated by Poverello House. Funding for that use has run out and is not expected to be renewed. The City has declared the site Surplus Land, so it is available for development into affordable housing.

While these Surplus Land parcels must still be purchased, they are often sold at less than fair market value. Municipalities are required to negotiate in good faith with affordable housing developers before initiating negotiations with others to dispose of the property.

Voter Services

by Sue Goldman



Last month, I listed the local offices that were up for election this year. In this column, I am listing the state-level and congressional offices.

Governor: There could be 30 or more candidates for governor on the ballot this year.

Secretary of State

Treasurer: The current treasurer, Fiona Ma, is termed out.

Attorney General: Rob Bonta is the incumbent

Insurance Commissioner: The current commissioner, Richard Lara, is term-limited.

Board of Equalization Districts 1-4: The current members in districts 1, 3, and 4 are termed out.

Congressional Districts: With the passage of Proposition 50 last November, Fresno has gone from 4 to 6 congressional districts.

- District 13 covers Fresno and Madera Counties – the incumbent would be considered Adam Gray
- District 20 covers Fresno and Kern Counties – the incumbent would be considered Vince Fong
- District 21 covers Fresno and Tulare Counties – the incumbent would be considered Jim Costa
- District 22 covers Fresno and Tulare Counties – the incumbent would be considered David Valadao
- District 5 covers Alpine, Fresno, Mono, Amado, and Inyo Counties – the incumbent would be considered Tom McClintock
- District 18 covers Fresno and Tulare Counties – the incumbent would be considered Zoe Lofgren

The Voter Services committee is gearing up for the primary election. With an enlarged committee, we now have 5 subcommittees: messaging, dissemination, partnerships with community organizations, tabling, and forums.

Behavioral Health

by Carol Evans



At the February meeting of the Fresno County Behavioral Health Board (BHB), Supervisor Luis Chavez (District 3) and Deputy County Administrative Officer (CAO) Amina Flores-Becker presented an overview of the new Office of Housing & Homelessness (OHH). The OHH was established in November 2025 by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors to serve as a centralized hub within the CAO for planning, coordinating, and administering the regional and local homelessness response. The purpose is to achieve a more efficiently coordinated and planned County response to homelessness in the region through collaboration with the City of Fresno and rural cities within Fresno County.

The OHH will serve as the administrative lead for the Fresno Madera Continuum of Care (FMCoC), which provides a comprehensive, coordinated homeless housing and services delivery system. Additionally, the OHH will be the lead agency for the new CalAIM benefit of Transitional Rent for up to 6 months for Medi-Cal members who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Street outreach and encampment resolution coordination will be led by the new office. Funding for emergency and interim housing, and management of homelessness grant programs, will be under the leadership of the OHH.

The new Office of Housing and Homelessness appears to be a well-thought-out plan for collaboration among the entities struggling to end homelessness. The BHB is hopeful that continued cooperation will lead to an eventual decline in the numbers of our vulnerable homeless population.

Director Susan Holt of the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) followed up with a housing inventory for individuals with behavioral health diagnoses. Currently, there are 554 units of Permanent Supportive Housing, 77 recovery residence beds, and 180 Bridge Housing shelter beds. A plan is being developed for a shelter specifically designed for people experiencing homelessness who have a substance use disorder (SUD). DBH plans to take advantage of any available funding opportunities to expand its housing inventory to assist its clients. The next BHB meeting will be on March 18th at Hope Plaza, 380 W. Ashland Avenue, Clovis, CA, from 3:30-5:30, and you are invited to attend.

Climate Action

by Naomi Bick



In 2025, various sources, including the Fresno Bee, reported that Fresno citizens paid some of the highest electricity bills in the country. The state of California has the second-highest electricity costs in the country, after Hawaii, according to the US Energy Information Administration. Even though the California Public Utilities Commission and the California Assembly have worked to reduce shareholder profits for Investor-Owned Utilities (IOUs), rates are expected to continue increasing for Fresnoans in the coming years, particularly with hotter summers on the horizon due to climate change.

Despite Mayor Dyer's lack of interest in creating publicly owned utilities or community choice aggregators (CCAs), the interconnected questions of rates, citizen oversight, wildfire and public vulnerability, and climate goals are coming to the surface. Now, more than half of California cities have some type of public electricity provider (either through publicly owned utilities, CCAs, or cooperatives). Research has shown that these forms of electricity provision may be better suited to meeting California's climate change targets and to providing increased citizen voice and oversight compared to traditional IOUs.

In the battleground for utility justice and public energy provision, communities across the country are also bracing for fights against impending AI Data Centers that consume valuable energy and water resources. By 2028, these data centers could consume enough energy to power 28 million Americans' households and enough water to fill 11 million Olympic-sized swimming pools, according to Food and Water Watch. Fresno will not be exempt from these conversations, as PG&E and the High-Speed Rail Authority both report increased interest in Fresno as a site for new data centers due to land costs. These issues of energy and climate justice are readily apparent here in Fresno, and utility provision sits at the heart of these questions.

Action Items

Write to your members of Congress.

Tell Congress That Federal Immigration Enforcement Has Gone Too Far

A letter template addressed to your representatives is available at

<https://www.lwv.org/take-action/tell-congress-federal-immigration-enforcement-has-gone-too-far>

For months, communities across the country, in Minnesota and beyond, have lived in terror as federal immigration enforcement agents have patrolled, surveilled, detained, disappeared, injured, and killed – our elected officials – people's constitutional rights by attacking and arresting peaceful protestors. Yet Congress – our elected officials – has played a pivotal role in funding and enabling this government-manufactured crisis, and they must act to stop these attacks.

We need your help to stand up to the League to demand that:

- Reject additional funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), or immigration detention.
- Investigate ICE, CBP, and the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS's) use of force.
- Impose additional DHS guardrails and accountability measures on immigration enforcement; and

Take steps to protect the constitutional rights of civilians to peacefully protest and assemble without having their lives threatened or taken.

It is time for all of us to stand up, speak out, and demand an end to these heinous actions. No agency or elected official is above the law. Democracy cannot endure when its government uses violence to silence dissent and evade accountability.

Our National League is asking us to write our Congress members to strongly **oppose** the newest iterations of the original SAVE Act, which required strict ID requirements to prove citizenship for voter registration—IDs that millions of citizens, especially poor and rural voters, do not have.

The newest versions of the **Save Act**, **The Save America Act** and the **Make Elections Great Again Act**,

- Will add additional provisions to limit voter access and voice.
- Will ban **Universal mail-in voting**.
- Will require that ballots be submitted by the end of election day.
- Will ban rank choice voting.
- Will Require photo IDs to register and vote.
- Will require frequent purging of the election.

Again, the National League has information and help in writing letters.

These provisions may be moving through Congress very soon. They need to be stopped.

Additional LWV information can be found at <https://www.lwv.org/save-act>.

A Special Thank you to our Member Donors for the Month of February

• **Diana and Jim Durham**

Our Local Sponsors



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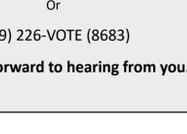
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WILPF supports local peace and social justice groups



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Looking for something meaningful to do? How about joining our Long Term Care Ombudsman Volunteer Team?

We advocate for the rights, quality of life and quality of care of residents in long-term care facilities, ensuring they're heard and treated with respect and dignity.

This volunteer opportunity is custom-fit and flexible, and you will have a talented staff team to support and guide you all the way!

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Join us to help Empower Voters, and Defending Democracy

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We'll look forward to hearing from you.