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**The
Fresno Voter**

Our League's 82nd Year!



March is Women's History Month

Monday, March 11

Regular Board Meeting
4 p.m. Zoom
Link will be sent

Thursday, March 28

Member Meeting
Youth Leadership
Institute
Stone Soup in person
5:30 p.m.
Refreshments

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, April 20

Annual Meeting
Speaker: Dr. Lisa Bryant
Business Meeting /Luncheon



“From the first settlers who came to our shores, from the first American Indian families who befriended them, men and women have worked together to build this nation. Too often the women were unsung and sometimes their contributions went unnoticed. But the achievements, leadership, courage, strength and love of the women who built America was as vital as that of the men whose names we know so well.

President Jimmy Carter's Message designating March 2-8, 1980 as National Women's History Week

JUN



Women's History Month Celebrates the theme "Women Who Advocate for Equity Diversity and Inclusion."

Here are some Fresno women who speak up and are leading change in their fields.



Mary Curry/Advocacy



Diane Milutinovich/Athletics



Juanita Stevenson/ Media



Jane Cardoza/Law



Co-president's Message

by Francine Farber

Journalists traditionally use “30” at the end of an article or upon retirement, probably dating back to the late 19th century when Western Union was the favored mode of communication. so as to separate an article from following dispatches. This is my 30 column for the Voter; as of our Annual Meeting in April I will no longer serve as co-president and therefore will not be writing these monthly “messages.”

Between 2007 and 2013 when I served as “solo” president, I wrote about 70 of these messages, and these past two years, alternating with Kay Bertken, another 10 or so. I plan to remain on the Board, however, and will still continue to edit the Voter, as writing and editing are my very favorite occupations.

In a span of less than a week between the end of December and the arrival of 2024, I celebrated my 90th birthday and my 69th wedding anniversary. When you arrive at monumental milestones like these it is inevitable to ask the eternal question, “How did I get here?” Sleepless at 3 a.m. recently and well beyond the age when mortality rears its head, I realized that I “got here” through some instant decisions that shaped my entire personal and professional life.

First quick decision: in 1938 at age 5, I accompanied my mother and 8 year old brother to the Wurlitzer Music School in Brooklyn. My brother had just become a Cub Scout and wanted to play in the marching band. He eagerly took home a trombone but after two lessons and no success gave it up. However, I had seen a teacher walking around the studio playing an accordion. “I want to do that,” I announced.

That childish statement led to 15 years of practice and performances and most notably a solo concert at Carnegie Chambers Music Hall in New York; being the youngest winner of the Arthur Godfrey Talent Scout show, (age 14 and pretending to be 16 so I could join the Musicians Union); appearances on TV and radio; and touring across the country at age 17 with the Phil Spitalny All-

(continued on page 4)

**The Voter is a monthly publication of
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February 2024

Transportation: Moses Stites presented performance statistics on the Biola service. The ridership included seniors, disabled and the general public. The service is not sustainable due to the high cost per passenger cost. He and his assistant are working on alternate plans.

Voter Services: Phone bank training was held for 16 people. Candidate forums are scheduled for February 6 and 12 with partners CMAC, FresnoLand and KVPR.

Program Planning: Marie is taking Board member sign-ups to bring food for breakfast. Several speakers and topics were suggested for a March member meeting.

Annual Meeting: It will be held at Stone Soup on either April 20 or 27, depending on speaker and caterer availability. Lisa Bryant is our first choice as a post-election speaker..

Education: The big news is that Superintendent Bob Nelson is retiring after seven years and will teach at Fresno State.

Measure E: After a heated discussion the Board majority decided to oppose Measure E, the sales tax to support Fresno State projects.

Measure C: Bill Jordan needs to be replaced as the Oversight Committee representative. Several names were suggested and will be pursued.

Mural: Kay met with Will Portis, an experienced artist and muralist. He will submit some sketches within a week.

LWVF IS A 501 C3 non-profit organization and all donations, including dues, are tax deductible. Donations are always accepted for the RBG Scholarship Fund at San Joaquin College of Law, the League's general fund, and any other purpose. Send to Treasurer, LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710

THIS MONTH WE THANK KATHY WEBB FOR HER GENEROUS DONATION.

Climate Change

by Andrea Farber De Zubiria



Our committee plans to monitor implementation of SB 1383, a California law that became effective in 2022, requiring jurisdictions to reduce the amount of organic waste sent to landfills.

Organic material like food and yard waste that is deposited in landfills produces large amounts of methane. Methane is a gas that traps much more heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide, (though it doesn't linger as long), contributing greatly to global warming. Also, when it interacts with other chemicals in the air, it creates ozone, a potent air pollutant that can cause lung damage and asthma.

The law aspires to reduce the amount of organic waste deposited in landfills by 75% by 2025, via composting food and yard waste. Proper composting does not create methane because it adds oxygen in the spaces between the food and yard waste, allowing only certain kinds of microbes to be present. Some industrial composting facilities use a bulldozer to turn compost in order to aerate it. They may also pump air into the pile or build the pile on top of a solid pad with air channels in it. The process is very controlled and leads to accelerated breakdown of the materials in the pile without causing unpleasant smells and dangerous gasses.

Because the procedures used for composting in an industrial facility create more heat in the pile than home composting, (which is usually limited to plant material) a wider variety of organic items can be added like meat, fish and bones. The materials break down into a nutrient-rich resource that can be mixed into soil to help plants and trees thrive.

Our committee will meet soon with Fresno City Manager Georgeanne White and officials of the Solid Waste Management Division of the Department of Public Utilities. We will also confer with the County of Fresno, which holds responsibility for coordinating implementation of organic waste collection throughout the various jurisdictions within the county.

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Water News

by Diane Merrill



At a recent meeting of the Sacramento –San Joaquin Delta Stewardship Council, the focus was on a study of harmful algal blooms (HABs) in the estuary in 2022. There are many kinds of HABs which are becoming more persistent due to increased water temperatures, extreme climate events, and over-enrichment of nutrients in the water.

Of particular concern are cyanobacteria HABs, which are harmful to humans and ecosystems, and can cause large fish kills. Cyanobacteria are blue-green algae found naturally in lakes, rivers, ponds, and other surface waters. During summer and fall, cyanobacteria blooms present as a blue green mass floating on the water.

High levels of cyanobacteria increase the likelihood of producing harmful algal toxins, cyanotoxins, in bodies of water. Cyanotoxins can threaten human health through insufficiently treated drinking water or eating contaminated fish. They can also be dangerous to people, pets, and livestock who have contact with the water.



During a cyanobacteria bloom at the San Luis Reservoir in 2022, the California Department of Water Resources conducted a public safety campaign urging people and pets to avoid physical contact with water at the San Luis Reservoir in Merced County and to avoid eating fish from the Reservoir.

The Delta Stewardship Council study highlighted some management strategies to reduce the intensity and frequency of cyanobacterial blooms in the Delta:

- ◆ Control of plant nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus commonly used in fertilizers.
- ◆ Use of chemical agents such as algaecides
- ◆ Use of aquatic vegetation as a biological control because it could hold back cyanobacterial growth by competing for nutrients in the water.
- ◆ Using water flows to disrupt the lifecycle of the cyanobacteria and prevent accumulation of algal colonies.
- ◆ Dredging water channels in the Delta to remove the seed stock of the cyanobacteria in the soil.

Co-President's Message

(continued from page 2)

All-Girl Orchestra after graduating from high school.

But backing up to another quick decision: as a 15-year-old junior at the High School of Music and Art in New York I had to choose between two English electives – creative writing or journalism. With no knowledge of either, and with little reason to do so, I chose the latter. I eventually became the editor of the school paper. **My fate was sealed: 75 years later I am still writing and editing.**

After returning from the Spitalny tour during a rehearsal for the next tour, and even though I had just been booked as a soloist at Radio City Music Hall, I quit and walked off stage. I said I wanted to lead a “normal” life by enrolling in college.

But my music involvement continued throughout college



and later life by playing the piano, percussion in the college symphony orchestra, gaining one year of very low level skill with the French horn, and finally at age 70, studying the cello.



The latter experience enabled me to fulfill my dream of playing chamber music, which I did for almost 20 years with the Fresno City College String Orchestra. I need to thank Conductor John Morrice for his patience and kindness in putting up with my frustration at not sounding like Yo Yo Ma. It was more like YoYo Grandma.

And another look backward: as an 18-year-old freshman at City College of New York I enrolled in Psych 101. The text book described various careers in psychology. My heart stopped when I read about psychological testing. I knew in that instant I wanted to pursue a career as a psychological examiner, now known as school psychologist. That instant decision led to a 30-year career in public schools as a psychologist and special services administrator.

My most important quick decision was made that same year. With my journalism background from

high school, I joined the City College Campus, the student newspaper. At the beginning of my second semester, hanging out in the grungy basement office, I noticed another student sitting at the back desk reading the NY Herald Tribune (now defunct). When he put down the newspaper I gasped, “who is that guy.” It was love at first sight, at least on my part, and Murray and I still are together. And I became the first woman editor of The Campus.

In listing my impulsive life choices, I shouldn't forget my decision to join the League. Arriving here from Connecticut after retirement, without knowing anyone except our daughter, we would have resigned ourselves to social oblivion were it not for Jane Worsley, life-long Fresno. Meeting her through a chance contact, she pulled me



into the League and my husband into the Saroyan Town Hall Lecture Series board. Those two connections opened up other avenues that have made our lives in Fresno so unexpectedly rewarding. Our eternal gratitude goes out to Jane and her extraordinary friendship and kindness.

Needless to say, the League opened up an enormous range of contacts and interests for me that I was fortunate in being able to pursue. To my mind most notable were the privilege of being on the League Board and editing the Voter for more than two decades; leading the effort to gain wider access to quality preschool in Fresno; planning our 75th anniversary in Fresno at the Roger Rocka Theater together with then-president Nyla Zender; planning and showcasing all the activities for the 100th anniversary celebration of Women's Suffrage; and interacting over the years with so many extraordinary women of great accomplishment.

Who knows what would have happened if I hadn't made those instant decisions? What would my life have been like? I don't think I am going to get another chance to find out.

Thank you, League. Thank you, Jane. Thank you, Kay for a fulfilling two-year partnership. Thank you, Murray, for your never-ending support and love.

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Francine

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



The Behavioral Health Board's 2024 Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors include: **1)** Continue to support recruitment and retention of behavioral health professionals, including fiscal incentives and technological flexibility; **2)** Continue to expand permanent supportive housing inventory with less restrictive criteria for individuals with behavioral health disorders at all levels of need, regardless of current housing status; **3)** Support the Department of Behavioral Health and its partners to collaborate while integrating messaging and outreach to educate the public on access for the continuum of mental health services; and **4)** Continue work to establish inpatient substance use disorder treatment programs for individuals with severe mental illness.

The Adult Services Committee reported on services available for Transition Age Youth—those aged 16-25. The Department has a program for young adults ages 17.5-23. The goal of the program is to assist young adults in making a successful transition into adulthood, through psychiatric, therapeutic, co-occurring and case management services. Those young people with greater challenges may be referred to the Full-Service Partnership program contracted with Central Star Behavioral Health. This program accepts individuals ages 16-25

For its monthly Site Visit the Board toured the new River Vista Behavioral Health Hospital in Madera, adjacent to Valley Children's Hospital. This new facility provides 24-hour inpatient treatment for individuals with behavioral health disorders, who are on involuntary holds. The hospital opened with 20 beds in August 2023. The hospital has a capacity for 128 beds, 40 of which will be reserved for children ages 5-17. The hospital plans to open more beds in phases and to be fully operational in 2025. Eventually, River Vista plans to offer a Partial Hospitalization Program (daytime) and an Intensive Outpatient Program (half day) for those who do not require 24-hour care, but who need extra support to live in the community.

The Board expressed concern for the Prevention and Innovation Programs that may be eliminated with the expected passage of Proposition 1. The Department of Behavioral Health is seeking other funding sources for these important programs if they should lose monies from the Mental Health Services Act.

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Housing

by Marianne Kast



On December 12, 2022, Karen Bass became Los Angeles' mayor. Just ten days later, Mayor Bass signed Executive Directive No. 1, promising a 60-day turn-around for the city's planning department to approve or reject affordable housing projects. According to "ED1," as long as a project meets a basic set of criteria, it must be approved, with no city council hearings, no neighborhood outreach, and no environmental impact studies required. And, LA law doesn't require developers to pay "prevailing wages" to construction workers on ED1 projects.

In the year or so since the directive was signed, LA's planning department has received proposals for over 16,000 affordable units. That number is more than the combined total number of affordable units approved in 2020, 2021, and 2022.

The fast-tracking of 100% affordable projects in combination with statewide "density bonus" laws that allow developers to cram more units and more floors on to a lot than would otherwise be allowed under local zoning laws, has made these projects very attractive. Other state laws let developers choose cost-saving features like limited parking spaces, less open space, smaller rooms, and less landscaping.

"Affordable" in LA terms still means that studio units in these projects might rent for \$1800. And, an affordable unit in LA will be available to those earning under \$100,000 per year. Developers are betting that the phenomenally high cost of housing in LA will drive residents earning over \$70K annually to rent an apartment with a few less features for a significant rent reduction below market rate.

ED1 is attracting developers who have not previously shown interest in building affordable housing. The ability to complete more units quickly makes these affordable housing projects financially viable. Additionally Los Angeles recently added a hefty "mansion tax" to the sale of homes priced over \$5M, which is driving luxury developers to look elsewhere for profitable projects.

At least two lawsuits have been filed over ED1, and a political battle is raging in LA over whether and how to make ED1 permanent. In the meantime, Angelenos are anxiously looking forward to this boost to available housing.

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Education

by Kay Bertken



Next Board Meetings
Wednesday, March 6
Wednesday, March 20

The most important recent news from the Fresno Unified School District is Bob Nelson's announcement of his June retirement. There are specific board policies that will direct the search and the hiring of a replacement.

The Board has full responsibility

First, it is important to know that the Board of Education has full responsibility for the search and selection of the superintendent, including determining the desired characteristics of the candidates. The Board will decide what education, skills, and leadership characteristics they want in their selection. The only prescriptive requirements in their policies are for administrative and teaching credentials, although this requirement may be waived by the board.

Policies enumerate the features of the search that should be considered by the board; the scope of the search (external or internal; statewide or national); whether to contract with a professional process facilitator; how and when to involve community members; and the procedures for screening and interviewing.

The board shall select candidates to be interviewed based on the recommendations of a screener or on their own assessment of whether the candidates meet their own established criteria, or they may review all applications if they desire. They will interview a candidate or candidates in closed session. They may visit candidates' current districts to verify qualifications. The board will deliberate in closed session to affirm its selection and announce that selection in open session.

Everything is the responsibility of the board to decide. A subcommittee of three board members has been selected to work on this.

Community involvement in place

The district has already involved the community. There has been a series of in-person meetings around the district to hear from the public what they want in a superintendent. They hired a consultant to run those meetings and compile the results. There is also a survey available on the district website for additional public comment. Data from those meetings and survey will be reported to the board at its March 6 meeting. Once that data is in, other decisions will follow.

Top themes consistent in district

The Board meeting last month included a presentation of the results of community meetings that have been held thus far. So far this year there have been seven regional meetings plus smaller group meetings in addition to an online survey. Among the more than 9,000 respondents, the top five themes of solicited comments, in order of priority, concerned academics, mental or physical health, engagement/school climate, safety, and staff support.

Last year school meals ranked among the most frequently mentioned concerns. While it still came in as #2 among students, it did not emerge as one of the top priorities overall. There was remarkable consistency among the regions of the district with respect to these top concerns.

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Voter Services

by Sue Goldman



Volunteers for Voter Services have been staffing the phone bank at the county election office and opening ballots at the county warehouse.

In partnership with FresnoLand, KVPR and CMAC we held three candidate forums: BOS Districts 2 and 3; and City Council District 6. All but one candidate appeared. There was a good turnout for each of the forums and feedback was positive. The moderators were League members Cathy Caples and Marianne Kast with Robin Chiero as the time-keeper for all three forums. Questioners were reporters from FresnoLand and KVPR.

In addition to these activities, we have solicited candidates to upload their information/profile to the national League's Vote 411 website. This website also has information on state and local propositions. Marianne Kast made a presentation to the Windham residents about the propositions.

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If you are interested in joining the Board, please contact Marie at mcsfresno@gmail.com

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DIVERSITY POLICY: There shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the LWVF on the basis of race, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or socio-economic level.

What do you get when you join the League? All for one fee, you become a member of the Fresno, California and National Leagues and receive their newsletters. You may participate in League studies of issues; receive leadership training; hone your public speaking skills; become knowledgeable about local and state issues; learn more about government, natural resources and social policies as your time and interests dictate. You will also meet some interesting and friendly women and men who represent diverse backgrounds but find common ground in keeping abreast of current issues.

Yearly Dues Individual - \$70 ~ Family - \$100 (2 members, same address) ~ Student - Subsidized

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