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Monday, May 8
Regular Board Meeting
4 p.m. in person
Stone Soup

Wednesday, May 10
Student Showcase for
Civic Education
Tower Theater
3—6 p.m.

Later in May
Members Meeting
Details to be announced

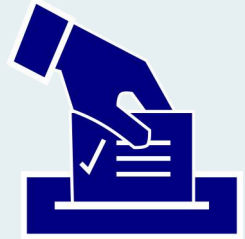
Monday, June 12
Regular Board Meeting
4 p.m. in person
Stone Soup

Sunday, August 27
Women's Equality Day
Unitarian Church
5 p.m.



May
14

THE FRESNO VOTER



Our League's 82nd Year!

More than 150 people celebrated the groundbreaking ceremony for a 15-million dollar structure in Selma that will help to maintain a fleet of electric and low emission vehicles owned and operated by the Fresno County Rural Transportation Authority.



Dignitaries don hard hats and pick up their shovels to break ground

Led by Authority General Manager Moses Stites, the April 21st celebration featured (brief) speeches from a number of local, county and state officials including Scott Robertson, the mayor of Selma, Supervisor Steve Brandau who is also a member of the county's Transportation Board, Assembly member Joaquin Arambula, and messages from State Senator Anna Caballero and U.S. Congressman Jim Costa.



A rendering of the office building

To serve its eventual fleet of 122 vehicles and address electrification needs, the facility will contain a maintenance shop, office building bus wash, tire storage and canopy and hazardous material storage. Now some vehicles are powered by compressed natural gas and some by electric batteries., with the goal being to have 100% powered by electric by 2030. A charging station is also being constructed on an adjacent site. The structure will have chargers for consumers to use for their EV cars as well as heavier-duty chargers for larger vehicles. Levels 1, 2 and 3 chargers will be available, with the numbers varying according to how fast they provide a charge.



Co-President's Message



April 2023

It is time to acknowledge that we are living in a bizarro world. By bizarro I mean fantastic. And by fantastic I mean both amazing and terrifying.

I came to this conclusion after watching a recent *60 Minutes* episode about Chatbot and the robotic world. You may have heard of the famous six-word short story reportedly by Ernest Hemingway: ***For sale: baby shoes: never worn.*** Chatbot's caretakers asked it to write an actual short story based on these words. In five seconds it was accomplished, explaining the death of the baby and the mother's grief. But how could this non-sentient device, that reputedly has no feelings and therefore no emotion, understand the specific grief of this situation?

A top Google scientist explained that the Chabot has absorbed billions of writings of all kinds and thus uses an algorithm that tells it, given word A, what the next most commonly used word is. So now it has two words in sequence. Then it asks for the next word, and so on, but all in a matter of nano-seconds.

To top off this feat, the scientists asked Chatbot to translate what it had written to an obscure foreign language. To their surprise in another four or five seconds the translation was complete. But the Chatbot had never been given instructions in that specific language! This non-being was able to take whatever language knowledge it had and "think" through a translation. Now the scientists are thrilled to learn that the Chabot can easily be fluent in every world language. But all without emotion.

The scientist who explained this was a 40-ish man born in India in a village where his family was on a five-year waiting list to get a rotary phone. How did this man get to be Google's top world person in this field? I don't have the answer but that in itself is a bizarro event. He explained that Google has more than a dozen centers around the world like the one in Oklahoma that was on camera, in order to explore and expand technological advances such as Chatbot. Inside the Oklahoma giant campus were endless walls of flashing boxes apparently ingesting endless amounts of knowledge so as to be able to spew it out in endless forms.

Continued on page 6

**The Voter is a monthly publication of
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Volume 82 No. 5 Editor: Francine M. Farber

Program planning: Final arrangements were verified for the Annual Meeting including site, caterer, procedures, and the need to call members to make reservations.

Earth Day: We will have a table at Fresno City College for Earth Day on April 22 and several board members volunteered to staff it.

Transportation: It was hoped that 5 people each from No on C and Yes on C will meet with a .

Housing: Member Patience Milrod, an attorney, helped to win a lawsuit against the City of Clovis which has not provided areas for affordable housing.

Notorious RBG: a new scholarship winner has been announced by San Joaquin College of Law and she will be invited to attend Women's Equality Day.

Student Unit: A Fresno State faculty member has volunteered to be the new director of our Student Unit. See page 6

Mural: Lupe Perez of the City Planning Department, who has an encyclopedic knowledge of all downtown buildings, will get back to us with a list of possibilities.

Infrastructure: It was decided to pay off the current office phone and change the provider. PayPal is not working for making reservations or paying dues. Eventgroove was suggested as an alternative.

Social responsibility: We are seeking information about a refugee family supported by the Unitarian Universalist Church to decide on the possibility of providing some assistance from the League.

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. Your estate planning is encouraged to consider LWVF. Please make out checks to LWVF and send to Treasurer, LWVF 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno 93710.

Education

by Kay Bertken



Fresno Unified Board meetings since the spring break have been consumed with safety, foreign language expansions, and literacy. In addition to its regular meetings, the Board held in-depth workshops on safety and literacy.

The safety workshop was likely motivated by teachers, students and community members confronting the Board with problems centered at Fresno High, but the safety issues and new programs were not isolated to Fresno High.

A survey of students, principals, and campus safety assistants indicated concerns with fighting, vaping and traffic safety. Interestingly, principals added adult civility among their top three concerns. Reports to the district's safety and security team over the last years have shown increases in calls related to mental health crises, calls to the police, arrests, lockdowns and students hit by cars.

Increase in social-emotional supports

The district has increased its investments in social-emotional supports from \$12.8 million in 2012/13 to \$40 million in 2022/23. The number of full-time employees devoted to supports has ballooned from 77 to 263, including school psychologists, social workers, and restorative justice counselors among others. Every school site has a safety and culture team of staff members. In spite of these investments, FUSD has high suspension and expulsion rates relative to the state averages in addition to continuing student and staff safety and welfare concerns.

More safety personnel to be added

New staff proposals include revamping the safety administrative structure with a new head of safety and three more regional safety specialists to oversee campus assistants so there is one in each district region. An assessment of the safety of student routes to school is also planned. In a phased-in approach, more assistants will be added to secondary schools and one at every elementary school. Cameras, vaping detectors, increased assistant training, and continued facility remodeling to guarantee single points of campus entry are also proposed.

The literacy workshop engaged the trustees with the district's low language proficiency scores. This year only 34% of K-3rd grade students scored at grade level. English Language Arts (ELA) scores on state tests fell from 39% in 2018/19 to 27% in 20/21 for the district at large. The whole state is grappling with low literacy achievement that was made worse during the pandemic. 58% of students in the state read below grade level on recent tests.

Community literacy campaign

The state has responded by producing the California Comprehensive State Literacy Plan. Fresno Unified is responding by launching a community-wide literacy campaign targeting the early grades. A task force made up of teachers, board members, administrators and community members has begun meeting to draft the local version of the state plan. The campaign imagines targeted efforts beginning next fall.



Fresno Unified is making progress in implementing California's Global 2030 goals: 1) half of K-12 students will participate in programs leading to proficiency in two or more languages by 2030; 2) the number of students achieving the State Seal of Biliteracy will triple; 3) the number of dual language immersion programs will quadruple, and by 2040 75% of graduates will earn the Seal of Biliteracy; and 4) from 2017 to 2030 the state will double the number of bilingual teachers.

Dual immersion programs expand

Currently, FUSD has 18 Dual Language Immersion schools and more than 4,300 immersion students. There are also 15 dual language preschool and 15 transitional kindergarten classrooms. Most of the students are in Spanish immersion programs, but more than 300 are in Hmong programs. Seals of Biliteracy are down somewhat since the pandemic, but 552 students earned the seal last year. The anticipation for this year is higher—775 students. The after-school programs are going to see an expansion of language learning over the next few years. In addition to Spanish and Hmong, Mixtec, Punjabi and Arabic will be added at various sites.

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Climate Change

by Andrea Farber De Zubiria



The problems of climate change and poor air quality are intimately intertwined.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, “Climate change can affect air quality, and certain air pollutants can affect climate change. For example, hot sunny days associated with a warming climate can increase ground-level ozone in some areas. Ground-level ozone is also a green-



Our table at Earth Day, Fresno City College, April 22

house gas that contributes to climate change by trapping heat in the atmosphere.”

Essentially, climate change is caused by a blanket of pollution that traps heat around the earth. This pollution comes from cars, factories, homes, and power plants that burn fossil fuels such as oil, coal, natural gas, and gasoline. Our committee has expanded its focus to combine climate change and air quality.

The World Bank reports that pollution and climate change are two sides of the same coin, but they are typically addressed separately. The World Bank recommends that they should be tackled jointly, with a focus on protecting peoples’ health – particularly in low- and middle-income countries – to strengthen human capital and reduce poverty. Reducing the use of fossil fuels will lead to healthier air and help to control the global warming that has led to climate change.

(continued on page 6)

Water News

by Diane Merrill



.Joe Yun, Executive Officer of the California Water Commission, was featured at a recent meeting of the Tulare League. Four LWVF members attended the April luncheon at which he spoke.

Mr. Jun began his presentation with the Commission’s mission statement: “Using its public forum, the Commission explores water management issues from multiple perspectives and formulates recommendations to advise the Department of Water Resources, and as appropriate, the California Natural Resources Agency, the Governor, and Legislature on ways to improve water planning and management in response to California’s changing hydrology.”

The Commission’s nine members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. Seven members are chosen for their expertise related to the control, storage, and beneficial use of water, and two are chosen for their knowledge of the environment. The Commission’s meetings are open to the public.

A major effort of the Commission, starting in 2019, was the development of the Climate Smart Water Portfolio, a compilation of 142 actions to address the impacts of climate change.

Much of Mr. Yun’s presentation, and questions from the audience, centered on the water whiplash from the three driest years on record to the wettest year on record. With this season’s extreme flooding, California needs to do more to prepare for extremes during both wet and dry years.

Climate change is a drought magnifier. Rising temperatures result in increased water evaporation from plants, the ground, and water sources. Over the next 20 years California could lose 20 percent of its water supply. More needs to be done to protect communities and ecosystems from climate impacts.

California’s water supply strategy includes large increases in the amount of water recycling, groundwater recharge, and stormwater capture by 2030. Communities in California have reduced indoor water use. More needs to be done to reduce outdoor water use.



Intranasal ketamine received restricted

The psychiatry toolkit has expanded, but the supply of psychiatrists and other mental health providers has not. California currently has a 5% deficit in numbers of psychiatrists, as assessed by the Healthforce Center at UC San Francisco. Their average age is 58. By 2030 the deficit will be 41% without growth in the number of psychiatric residency positions in the state.

California must more than double its current portfolio of 180 psychiatry residencies to fully cover the predicted needs. The expansion should focus on the Central Valley, which has the lowest supply of psychiatrists per population in the state—less than one half of the state average. Finding access to the newest treatment modalities, or any psychiatric care, in our area is a major challenge.

The prevalence of major depression in the U.S. has traditionally been estimated at 11% but is now likely higher due to the unique combination of stressors of our times. This projects to a prevalence of chronic refractory depression of 2%, or 1.6 million Americans. The medical costs of this cohort, based on current claims data, is 48 billion dollars annually. That may be the small part of the problem. The downstream social costs are too often devastating: lost occupational productivity, family disruption, deficits in child rearing, drug addiction, and homelessness. It is impossible to price out the ever-echoing social costs of major chronic depression, but certainly it is right that the most recent California budget allocates 248 million dollars to increasing access to psychiatric care. rbertken@comcast.net

Over the last two decades brain research has made dramatic advances in our understanding of our emotional experience, with a laser focus on depression. This gain in knowledge could be a game changer, reverberating throughout human culture. Will our clinical psychiatric infrastructure be up to the challenge?

Neuroscientists have identified key biochemical messengers, both promoters and inhibitors of moods, and their sites of activity. They have mapped interactions between key sites in the brain responsible for modulation of fear, anger, anxiety, and negativity as well as calm, joy, security, and assuredness. More recently this knowledge has led to electrical and magnetic stimulation of specific areas of the human brain to correct serious mood disorders, chiefly severe chronic depressive illness.

On the clinical psychiatry frontier, the durable anti-depressant effects of brief, low-dose exposures to the psychedelic agents psilocybin, ketamine, and LSD have broadened the prospects for difficult cases of treatment-resistant major depression. Brain imaging in these trials has shown neuroplasticity—the growth of new neurons and new interconnections—that has been seen in patients recovering from stroke-induced motor and sensory neuron damage.

approval by the FDA in 2019. As a treatment for severe refractory depression, only psychiatric centers following strict treatment and reporting protocols were allowed to prescribe Sprivato, the branded form of intranasal ketamine.

Regrettably, generic *injectable* ketamine is an approved, widely available anesthetic agent. It leaked out into the public sphere via compounding pharmacies and well-meaning physicians prescribing it for depression and anxiety. In short order, it evolved into an addictive street drug with harmful adverse effects. Under the auspices of Sprivato-certified psychiatrists, it remains a useful option for refractory mood disorders.

Stimulation of the left frontal cortex using powerful magnetic fields (transcranial magnetic stimulation, TMS) has proven effective in about half of patients with refractory severe depression. Patients must live close to the TMS centers because daily visits are required for six weeks. Sometimes the process must be repeated much later. These delivery problems limit access to this treatment, hurdles that may be resolved by emerging, revised magnetic technologies.



Student Unit gets a renewed life

by Francine Farber



Dr. Naomi Bick has agreed to be the new Student Unit Director on our Board.

Her much-welcome volunteerism comes after several years of the Unit's dormancy largely due to the pandemic. She is excited to use her interests, which align with the League's, and her advocacy skills to involve both women and men students in current issues including voter registration and getting out the vote.

Dr. Bick is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science. She received her Ph.D. from Western Michigan University in 2021. Her current research projects explore municipal climate change governance, using a mixed methods approach (regressions, surveys, interviews, and case studies).

The Student Unit is the only officially recognized one in the United States. While many leagues have members who are students, we have not heard of another one that is actually a separate-but-linked affiliate such as ours.

The Student Unit was founded more than a dozen years ago by Dr. Diane Blair, then a professor in the Mass Communications Department at Fresno State. She led students in writing a constitution for the group and making it an official student organization. When her extra duties made her the leader of the Fresno State Faculty Association and now a state officer for the California Faculty Association, she turned over the reigns to Dr. Lisa Bryant, who was then a professor in the Department of Political Science. Now as chairperson, and coincidentally as Dr. Bick's "boss," both Dr. Bryant as well as Dr. Blair have come forward to assist the new Student Unit Director in bringing the organization back to life and making it thrive.

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President's Message

(continued from page 2)

Another view showed us robots playing soccer. Even though they had been given only rudimentary aspects of the game they had figured out for themselves the rules and moves necessary to win. What will happen to us? Well, this scientist said that there will be many jobs lost, but many new jobs created, but that all jobs will be affected over the next 10 years or so. Are you ready?

Was this column written by a Chatbot?

I'm not telling.

Francine

Climate Change


(continued from page 4)

Our committee is learning about the agencies that focus on air quality in our area. Two are government agencies, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District. The Air Resources Board sets standards for the state and oversees government agencies of the counties and cities. The mission of CARB is to reduce air pollutants while considering effects on the economy. At a more local level, the Air Pollution Control District develops and implements control measures in 8 counties in the Central Valley. This agency sets standards for factories and plants, and conducts public education efforts.

The Central Valley Air Quality Coalition and the Central California Asthma Collaborative are non-profit organizations. The Central Valley Air Quality Coalition is a partnership of 70 organizations concerned with air quality. The Central California Asthma Collaborative provides extensive services to low-income residents who have asthma. We plan to find out more about these organizations by attending their meetings to assess how the League can help. afarberdezub@gmail.com

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State League Convention
is May 19-21
in San Francisco

**Look for the
Convention News
in our June edition**





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Men and Women age 16 and above Making Democracy Work

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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

Please send your check payable to the League of Women Voters, Fresno, with registration form (below), to: LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710.

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