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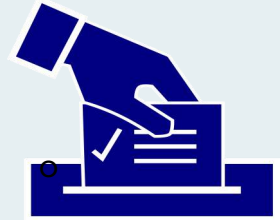
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THE

FRESNO

VOTER



Our 84th Year



Monday, May 13
Regular Board
Meeting
Stone Soup
4 p.m.



Kay Bertken

Our
New
Co-
Presidents



Robin Chiero

I went to school in Fresno all the way through a bachelor's degree and secondary teaching credential at Fresno State. After getting married to Richard Bertken, I worked for a publishing company in Los Angeles while he finished medical school.

From Los Angeles, we moved to Washington, D.C. where he did his residency and I got a job as a too-young and naïve counselor at an all- Black D.C. public high school. I followed him to his residency at Stanford; at Stanford's School of Education's Administration and Policy Analysis Program, I got a Ph.D. the same year I was pregnant with our first daughter. I was interviewed on TV with my OB-GYN focusing on a trend in "older women having children." I was 35.

We moved back to Fresno when Richard took a faculty position with the new UCSF medical training program. I made him sign a contract that we would stay here for a maximum of 3 years. That didn't exactly work out. I got a job as an adjunct professor teaching statistics at Fresno State that wound up lasting 37 years with an occasional foray into consulting work for Fresno Unified.

At the urging of Liz Shields, I joined the League in 2005. Before long I was on the Board and inherited the education portfolio from Francine Farber and Jane Worsley.

After attending a technical college in San Diego to become a computer programmer. I found that teaching was to be my destiny, Rather than becoming a programmer, I was hired to teach at the college.

I also worked as a technical writer and completed masters and doctoral degrees with a focus on educational technology. The latter led to a position in the Kremen School of Education at Fresno State as a faculty member in teacher preparation and for the last six years as the Regional Director for CalState-TEACH, an online-supported CSU program with a regional center at Fresno State.

Since retirement in 2014 I have enjoyed some of my favorite things, including travel, baseball (the Grizzlies and the San Diego Padres), cats (both my own two and through volunteer work with the Valley Animal Center), gardening, and reading. I am active in a philanthropic educational organization and am a member of the Executive Committee of the Fresno State Emeriti and Retired Faculty Association.

Please join us at a board meeting and find out more about what the League does and how you can help.

Co-Presidents Message



April 2024 Board Minutes

Honor: Our League is being honored as a “Community Champion” by Building Healthy Communities and will be featured at an event on April 19 at the Doubletree Hotel.

Annual Meeting: Plans were finalized for the annual meeting on April 20. A luncheon is planned at Stone Soup for \$25. Dr. Lisa Bryant, Political Science Department Chair at Fresno State, will be our speaker on voting issues. Dr Bryant, an LWVF member, was the faculty advisor for our Student Unit for a number of years.

Membership Meetings: Our monthly membership meetings have attracted an enthusiastic but relatively small number of members outside of the board. An ad hoc committee will meet to discuss whether alternative plans should be made or some adjustment to the procedures we are following.

RBG Scholarship: Blanca Delgado was named the winner by the committee from the San Joaquin Law School. She will receive a free year’s membership in the league and be invited to our events. She will be featured at our Women's Equality Day celebration in August.

Mural: A grant proposal for \$15,000 has been submitted to the Fresno Arts Council. Awards will be made in June. If we receive a grant it would be used to add to the Centennial Fund that we have set aside for this purpose.

Lawsuit: We have joined with the Sierra Club and the Central Valley Partnership in suing the County of Fresno because of the inadequacies of its General Plan, The City of Fresno has its own lawsuit against the County.

Our Fresno League was honored at Building Healthy Community’s 2024 Community Champions and Fundraising Event last month.

The event was described as “Bringing together local leaders and community-based organizations going the extra mile in their efforts to create one healthy Fresno. “ Four individuals-- the retiring head of The California Endowment, a high school activist, the executive director of a local non-profit, and the mayor of Firebaugh-- were the leaders chosen as this year’s Community Champions. The League was the single organizational recipient.

The program for the event contained descriptions of the recipients—an unexpected gift of free advertising for our League to the large number of people (representing diverse community organizations)in attendance. Several people approached us at the event, thanking us for our work. A representative of the Yokuts tribe said they appreciated our support for the renaming of that community.

Francine accepted the trophy that came with the award. We also came away with multiple proclamations-- from State Assembly member Joaquin Arambula, from Sal Quintero representing the Board of Supervisors, from Mayor Jerry Dyer, from Representative Jim Costa and from State Senator Anna Caballero., We are going to be challenged to find enough display space in our office conference room.

It was especially nice to be recognized by BHC. We have been working with them over the past year in a multi-partner coalition related to Measure C, the local transportation sales tax. Additionally, we have joined them in their efforts to counter a highway project that will further degrade air quality in an already impacted area of southwest Fresno. We have worked directly with them previously on the successful campaign to pass the City Parks Measure. P.

We share multiple concerns with BHC, most importantly the primacy of including community participation in decisions that impact our region.

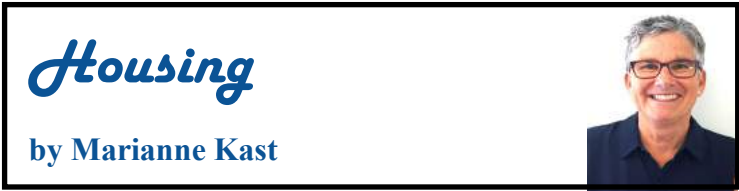
Kay

The Voter is a monthly publication of the League of Women Voters of Fresno

Mailing address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710

Volume 65 No. 5 Editor: Francine M. Farber

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.



The government defines affordable housing as any home, rented or owned, where the costs comprise less than 30 % of the monthly household income. The term defines any property that is available to lower income families at less than market value.

Public housing refers to units owned and operated by government entities, typically public housing authorities, and funded through government subsidies and programs. Rent is set at a percentage of each tenant’s income and units are designated for low-income individuals or families who meet certain eligibility requirements.

Affordable housing, however, includes a broader range of housing options that can be available to individuals and families at various income levels. It can be developed and owned by government agencies, non-profit organizations, or private developers. The projects receive funding from a variety of sources like grants, tax credits and private investments.

In 2023, California State Assembly Member Alex Lee introduced AB 309, The *Social Housing Act*, that would have created a statewide agency to fund, build, and manage affordable, mixed-income housing both for rent and for ownership. Though the measure passed both houses of the legislature, Governor Newsome vetoed the bill.

Recent interest has highlighted Vienna, Austria’s Social Housing system where the city government owns and manages 220,000 housing units. There, the city of Vienna buys land suitable for residential development then solicits proposals from private developers to build and retain ownership of the units. After a developer is selected, the city sells the land to the developer at an affordable price and offers low interest loans and affordable repayment terms for the project. Developers who cooperate must allow the city to rent half the units to low-income residents. Then they are able to lease the rest of the units to moderate income residents. Rents are regulated by the city so that no resident pays more than 20-25% of their income for housing.



Generous donations were received from the following members and community

In memory of Jane Worsley

Francine Farber (to RBG Fund)
Shirley and Bill Golden
Kathy Webb

In memory of Rudy Savala

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Terry Johnson

General Donations

Christine Boogaert, Francis Connolly
Bonnie Corcoran, Charlotte Pavelko
Lynne Rodriguez, Kathy Webb, Jennifer Williamson

WELCOME to OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

**Linda Bacon; Brooke Frost;
Diane Hansen; Eve Hudson
Stephanie Lynch; Madelyn Snead
Linda Mtamanika Youngblood**

BABS ESKIN

League member Babs Eskin passed away at age 89 on April 9. She had been a member of the League since 1997. Her husband, Saul, is a current member.

Babs graduated from Temple University and was involved in social justice issues throughout her life. She was a volunteer for the Urban League’s Fair Housing Task Force, advocated for integration before the Fresno School Board and was active in the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. As a social worker she practiced for 20 years at the Bullard Counseling and Psychotherapy Centre.

A Celebration of Life will be held on June 29 at 11 a.m. at the Unitarian Church.

It is unlikely that California would undertake a housing system like Vienna’s, but the regulatory features of that system show that high quality affordable housing can be provided for every resident.

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Education

by Kay Bertken



It is remarkable how much expansion there has been in the availability of transitional kindergarten, preschool and child development centers at Fresno Unified.

We recently interviewed the head of the Early Learning Department at Fresno Unified to catch up on the programming there. The goal of the district is to have its students experience two years of developmentally appropriate preschool prior to entering kindergarten. These programs are key to FUSD's ambition to have all students reading by the first grade.

In 2021, Governor Newsome signed a bill phasing in the expansion of Transitional Kindergarten (TK) to all 4 year-olds by 2025-2026. Currently there are 115 TK classrooms offering a five-hour daily program in Fresno Unified; one to three per elementary school. The program maintains a teacher-student ratio of 1 to 12. TK students are also eligible for after school programs.

Nearly all the elementary schools also offer a three-hour preschool program for 3 and 4 year-olds. Parents of 4 year-olds who qualify for TK can opt to keep their child in preschool. These programs maintain a teacher-student ratio of 1 to 8.

Currently there is space for 3,000 students at the preschool sites, with 600 of those slots unfilled. Enrollment is happening now, and district staff are working to increase enrollments, especially in southwest Fresno where many parents are reluctant to move their young children away from friends and family caregivers.

The district also maintains six child development centers for infants and toddlers, with two more scheduled to open in the fall on the new Farber Campus and at the Caesar Chavez Adult School. These programs do charge on a sliding fee scale based on family income. The programs give priority admission to children of FUSD students who pay nothing, but they are open to anyone in the district. The low price associated with these programs (\$100+ a month) make them enormously attractive in an environment where daycare,

(continued on page 5)

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



A Community Needs Assessment based on behavioral health issues has been conducted to identify gaps, needs, and community perspectives, and to help identify underserved or ineffectively served communities and populations. Common themes were 1) timely access to services, 2) culturally responsive care, 3) language access, 4) mental health literacy, 5) in-person care (as opposed to telemedicine), 6) treatment alternatives, 7) stigma reduction, and 8) peer-to-peer resources. The Department of Behavioral Health plans to create strategies to address these identified needs.

This month members of the Behavioral Health Board visited Butterfly Gardens, a Permanent Supportive Housing project built with "No Place Like Home" funds from the state of California. This is the first Permanent Supportive Housing project built in the city of Clovis.

Butterfly Gardens has 74 one-bedroom apartments for individuals with Serious Mental Illness who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. Individuals are referred by the Coordinated Entry System of the Fresno-Madera Continuum of Care or by the Department's Housing Access Resource Team. *Upholdings* developed and manages the property, while *Exodus Recovery, Inc.* provides supportive services for the residents. The primary goal for all residents is to maintain their housing, but staff works with individuals to meet their personal goals, such as avoiding crises, gaining employment, increasing income, and perhaps moving to more independent living situations.

The Adult Services Committee met with staff of Dream-Catchers, which is a program to help clients with Serious Mental Illness obtain and maintain employment. The program partners with the State Department of Rehabilitation and the Department. Staff develops relationships in the community with businesses and employers that are willing to hire clients. Clients practice interviewing skills and learn to write resumes. Rehab pays for interview clothes, uniforms, and equipment that individuals may need. If clients desire more education, the program assists them with applications and tuition. Currently there are 80 clients, 35 of whom are employed.

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Annual Meeting elects board, features speaker on vote centers

by Francine Farber

An overflow crowd joined our Annual Meeting on April 20 at Stone Soup to conduct our business meeting, elect a new board, and listen to a presentation on voting research.

The new board will be headed by co-presidents Kay Bertken and Robin Chiero (see page 1). Also new to the board is Faye Nennig, who will join as a Director at Large. In that role she will have the opportunity to acquaint herself more fully with League policies and procedures while assisting other Board members with their specialties. Appointed to the Nominating Committee for next year are board members Francine Farber and Dolores O'Neal, and members Janet Baker, Diane Merrill and Angela Presto. Diana Durham announced that we have 161 members, up from 150 just a few months ago.



Dr. Lisa Bryant, chair of the Fresno State Political Science Department, gave a presentation comparing vote centers in Fresno County and St. Louis County in Missouri.

Friant Ranch update

by Radley Reep

People focused on land use planning in Fresno County have once again turned their attention to the Friant Ranch Project and the General Plan.

The Friant Ranch Project is a proposal to construct 2,500 residential units near Friant. That project was dealt a setback in 2018 when the California Supreme Court ruled that the project's environmental impact report (EIR) was deficient, which resulted in the loss of project approvals. In 2023, the County circulated a revised Draft EIR, and last month, due to the complexity of both the project and the public's comments on the recirculated EIR, the County hired a legal firm to as-

sist with preparation of the Final EIR. It's likely the project will be ready for reconsideration later this year.

There is a new proposal to construct a small 18-lot subdivision in an unincorporated area of the county just northeast of Fresno on land designated Agriculture. According to County documents, the County's planning staff has concluded that although subdividing the property is contrary to the General Plan, a Board vote to redesignate the land from Agriculture to Residential will eliminate any incongruity.

With respect to recent legal challenges

Education *(continued from page 4)*

especially for infants and toddlers, is scarce and expensive. There are waiting lists at all of these sites.

The district is heavily engaged in training programs. For caregivers of infants and toddlers, the district offers playgroups for friends, families and neighbors that provide insights into early childhood development. The Early Learning Department is also providing training to principals as they deal with preschoolers on their campuses. The district is training its student parents by offering dual enrollment courses in partnership with Fresno City College and Fresno Pacific. These courses provide credit toward a certification in Early Childhood Education and a path toward possible employment in one of these programs.

Many of Fresno Unified's pre-K programs support dual language learning, a curriculum that was developed here in Fresno and has now been adopted state-wide. Twenty-five of the district's preschool and TK classrooms also offer full inclusion for special needs children. Both of these programs are still expanding.

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of the County's February 20, 2024 decision to revise the General Plan, in early April the Sierra Club joined the lawsuit initially brought by the Central Valley Partnership and LWVF. The County is now preparing the administrative record for upcoming court hearings, and the first meeting between parties is scheduled for early May.

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adults report difficulty in paying medical bills. Many avoid basic care for chronic but treatable diseases—

would be a convoluted undertaking, rolling out for decades.

Two recent, specific cost control actions at the federal level provide hope that our government can gradually rein in our overspending. The Inflation Reduction Act provided for price negotiations between Pharma and Centers for Medicare/Medicaid Services (CMS) for ten high-cost drugs.

Federal cost control efforts

The ten drugs stay on patent and face little competition. Their average annual cost is around 5 billion dollars. If the average cost reduction among the ten drugs turned out to be 50%, CMS would save 25 billion dollars yearly. But there's more. These negotiations are planned to happen on a yearly basis, with significant cumulative savings over time.

In January CMS completed the Interoperability and Prior Authorization Final Rule. This provided for immediate health data flow between physicians and health plans to minimize the time required for a decision about the need for a proposed expensive medication or procedure. Estimate for cost savings: 2 billion dollars annually

CMS spends 1.6 trillion dollars annually for its healthcare plans. The VA Health System, managed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, expects to spend 335 billion in 2024. Private and employment-based health plans account for 3 trillion. The budget impact of these changes is modest in the here and now. But in Wallachian thinking, this would be genuine progress, one of many steps toward a sustainable and efficient healthcare system.

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diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease—that would be affordable and cost-effective for our population but not affordable for the affected individuals.

One fifth of respondents reported skipping prescription drug fills or refills because of the price. Chronic non-adherence to prescription drugs often results in poor outcomes and much higher downstream healthcare expenses.

Despite curtailing their purchase of expensive prescription drugs, fourteen million people in the United States have current medical debt of more than \$1,000, and 3 million people have medical debt of more than \$10,000. Overall, 43% report having incurred medical debt paid off over a year or more during their lifetime.

We spend the most on health

The United States has the highest costs of healthcare in the world. In 2022, U.S. healthcare spending reached \$4.5 trillion, \$13,493 per annuitant. By comparison, the average cost of healthcare per person in other wealthy countries is less than half as much.

Reams of health data have proven the long-term, robust return on investment for ongoing care for common chronic conditions. Our citizenry is confronted by the dilemma of paying for “Wallach’s cathedral”—universal, government-sponsored healthcare—without promptly receiving full benefits. It

The futurist Ari Wallach has authored a book, *Longpath*, and developed a PBS series cleverly titled *A Brief History of the Future*. His keystones are “cathedral culture” and the obligations needed for achieving excellence in ancestering (to Wallach, a verb).

Cathedrals through history took two or three lifetimes of planning and laborious stone construction. No one started the work with the expectation of seeing the magnificent product. Children and grandchildren held small hope of seeing the finished cathedral.

Wallach envisions a new culture finding hope and meaning in serving the interests of future generations. Given the polarized, contentious populace at this moment, Wallach’s long view feels hard to accept. However, Wallach may be practicing population-based cognitive and behavioral therapy, reframing the news about war, famine, pandemics, healthcare, and immigration as worthy challenges. He advocates relentless incremental progress in our state, national, and international governance.

Healthcare costs of concern

Healthcare recently ranked a distant 12th in political polls of the issues confronting the next presidency, but healthcare polls by the Kaiser Family Foundation found widespread concern among American families about healthcare costs, especially copays. Half of U.S.

Climate Action

by Faye Nennig



Here are some sources of information about climate change to keep you up-to-date on relevant news.

Citizens' Climate Lobby

(citizensclimatelobby.org) – A non-profit, nonpartisan grassroots advocacy climate change organization focused on national policies to address the national and global climate crisis. Members seek to create a broad, bi-partisan, and sustainable foundation for climate action. Two of our own members, Connie Young and Andrea De Zubiria, are regional leaders in CCL

The Environmental Collaborative of Central California (EcoCenCal.org)

- Seeks to cultivate human and environmental harmony for communities of Central California by providing a platform for exchanging knowledge and promoting the environmental interests of local organizations. LWVF members Radley Reep, Connie Young and I serve on the Board.

Fresnoland.org – produces 2 newsletters: *Toplines* (every M-F) and *This Week in Fresno* (Saturdays). The organization exists to make policy public, for, and with all residents of the central San Joaquin Valley. The reporters strive to be fair, independent, transparent, and aware of how journalism can help balance (or perpetuate) historic imbalances in power.

San Joaquin Valley Water (sjvwater.org) – An independent, non-profit news site dedicated to covering water in the San Joaquin Valley.

Politico California Climate (politico.com) – POLITICO strives to be the dominant source for news on politics and policy in power centers across every continent.

Climate Action California (climateactionca.org) – CAC is a community of individuals, and a coalition of organizations and groups, working together to hasten the end of the climate crisis. Engaged at every level of government, they advance science-based climate policy that will speed the transition to a just, equitable low-carbon economy, and a healthy planet.

(continued on page 8)

Water News

by Diane Merrill



Climate change has resulted in highly variable water flows on the Kings River in the past several years. Water year 2023 was the wettest on record, preceded by three years of drought. The Kings River is the primary source of water for the eastern and central valley areas of Fresno County. It provides an estimated 92 percent of the surface water supplies to the Kings Groundwater Subbasin that underlies this portion of the County.

I thought it would be interesting to revisit an article I wrote for the July 2020 Voter about a statistical study on Kings River water flows by the late hydrogeologist Dr. David Cehrs.



Dr. Cehrs did a detailed statistical analysis of annual precipitation and Kings River flow data over the 124 year period from 1896 to 2020. The data pointed to increasing variability in Kings River flows, with extended dry periods punctuated with periods of very high flows. He highlighted the five-year drought from 2012 through the summer of 2016, followed by flooding in the fall of 2016 and spring of 2017.

Another indicator of this variability is that the highest and lowest recorded annual Kings River flows have occurred since 1978, with very few years near the average. This is consistent with climate change modeling predictions that weather conditions are becoming more chaotic now and into the future.

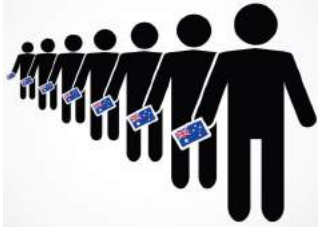
Dr. Cehrs urged local water agencies to prepare for groundwater overdrafts during dry periods and to employ a full range of methods to capture Kings River water charge groundwater during wet periods. These methods can include directing water into stormwater basins and to dedicated groundwater recharge basins, and flooding fields that are planted with trees or vines that can tolerate some standing water.

Voter Services

by Sue Goldman



The committee is making voter engagement a priority. We hope to meet with Dr. Carole Goldsmith, the Chancellor of the State Center Community College District, and Geraldo Reyes, the student trustee for the State Center Community College District, to see how we can partner with them in this endeavor.



The Voter Services Committee has expanded in number this year and has started to meet regularly. We are focused on the following areas:

- ◆ Phone bank and ballot opening Voter Registration and engagement
- ◆ Vote 411 and Voter Guides Proposition presentations
- ◆ Possible candidate forums in the Fall
- ◆ LWVUS Women Power Democracy goals – utilizing their resources for voter engagement

It is important to engage in voter registration but it is equally essential to encourage people to actually vote. This is especially true for young people. The highest percentage of young people voting was in the 2020 Presidential election as shown in the table below.

18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Total
63.64	61.54	69.48	77.58	83	88.02	81.75	75.54

It is obvious that older people voter in larger percentages. The youth vote was impressive in this election. However, if you look at the numbers for the March Primary, which had low voter turnout overall, you can see the large discrepancy that commonly exists between the youth and senior citizen vote.

18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Total
12.75	12.29	19.09	20.06	43.34	59.32	62.36	30.91

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Climate Action *(continued from page 7)*

Climate Coach – The Washington Post: This climate newsletter arrives via email. You do not have to subscribe to *TWP* to receive it.

Climatenow.com – “The knowledge we need for the future we want.” This web site covers a wide range of climate news and explains the scientific ideas, technologies, and policies relevant to the global climate crisis.

Capital & Main (capitalandmain.com) – An award-winning non-profit publication that reports from California on the most pressing economic, environmental



and social issues of our time. It covers income inequality, climate change, the green economy, health, public education, immigration, race, and criminal justice.

Yale Climate Connections

(yaleclimateconnections.org) – An initiative of the Yale Center for Environmental Communication, this newsletter provides the scientific and economic context of climate issues. Its news service aims to help you understand the reality of climate change and what you can do about it.

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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.

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