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# The *Fresno* **VOTER**



Monday, November 27  
(change of date)  
Regular Board Meeting  
League Office, 5 p.m.

Charter Schools Panel  
Wednesday,  
November 8



Holiday Party  
Sunday, December 3, 2-4 p.m.  
Watkins Home  
Invitation to Follow



Members and guests are always  
invited to all League meetings  
and events

## CHATTER ABOUT CHARTERS

### Charter School Panel Lunch & Learn

Wednesday, November 8—Noon

Betty Rodriguez Library

3040 North Cedar, Fresno, at Cedar and Shields

Join the Education Committee to learn more about Fresno Charter Schools. Our outstanding panelists will be

- **Jeff Sands**, Managing Regional Director,  
*CA Charter Schools Assn.*
- **Diego Arambula**, Executive Director,  
*GO Fresno*
- **Melissa Dutra**, *FUSD* Instructional Supt. for Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development, former Executive Director,  
*Dailey Charter School*



*They will discuss current trends, growth, issues of concern, areas of strength, and answer your questions.*

### *DID YOU KNOW...*

- California has more than 800 charter schools
- The City of Fresno has more than 15 charter schools
- As of a few years ago, 11 states had no charter schools
- In 1991, Minnesota passed the first law enabling the creation of charter schools

*Light refreshments will be served. Feel free to bring your own lunch.*

*Members, potential members and guests welcome—no charge.*

## President's Message



Last November in Monterey County, voters passed "Measure Z," which banned new oil and gas operations in Monterey County's unincorporated areas. The initiative was designed to prohibit the use of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) as well as other high-intensity methods of oil and gas extraction. The measure also prohibited new land uses that utilize oil and gas wastewater injection and storage (impoundment) and phased out those in operation.

About a month later, Monterey County became the target of a lawsuit brought by Chevron and Aera Energy, two large oil-drilling firms currently active in Central California, effectively stopping the implementation of the provisions of Measure Z. The companies claim the measure restricts how they can use their land. Further, they claim the County does not have jurisdiction over oil and gas rights.

In March, 2017, the Monterey County Board of Supervisors voted down a proposed two-year moratorium on fracking in that county, despite the unanimous recommendation of its Planning Commission and hundreds of emails and letters of support from residents.

I'm interested in this story because for the last several months I've seen many versions of Chevron's "Fresno County Doers" advertising on TV, Facebook, and in print media. The ads are so complimentary of Fresno County, our agricultural and cultural diversity, and our citizens. I wondered why Chevron would be gratuitously pitching the benefits of our county. Now, a few months later, the ads contain testimonials and photos showing what a great partner Chevron has been to our community. In other words, Chevron has made money here, and we've benefitted also.

Near the entrance to this year's Fresno County Fair, Chevron installed a good-size interactive display, pushing STEM education, hosted by young people in "Chevron" t-shirts. Seeing that, I had the sinking feeling that we, in Fresno County, are being played. Chevron is reminding us of the good it has done for our county lest we consider restrictions or an outright ban on fracking and other intensive oil and gas extraction processes.

*Marianne*

The VOTER is a monthly publication of the League of Women Voters of Fresno  
Mailing Address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710  
Volume 76, No. 11 Editor: Francine Farber

## Member News

Please edit your roster



### New Member

**Jack Ortega**  
1565 North Farris  
Fresno, CA 93728  
375-1176  
Laort4@aol.com

**Special thanks to Jacquie Canfield, our web master *pro tem*, for the many hours spent on planning and organizing our new site.**

*Welcome to Isabel Hernandez, a freshman at Fresno State, who is a volunteer observer at government meetings and also the acting secretary of our Student Unit.*

**A donation to League makes a great birthday or holiday gift or as a memorial. Please make checks out to**

**LWVF**

**1345 Bulldog Lane  
Fresno, CA 93710**

**The League is now a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization so your dues payments and donations are tax deductible and gratefully accepted.**



**Thank You!**

# Join a Priority Committee!

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

We are writing content to describe the issues that the LWVF is active in locally for our new MyLO website. Users of the website will be able to link directly to online versions of many useful documents including the Fresno County General Plan, the LWVUS positions, and California's voter registration system. We hope to "go live" with the new website in the next couple of weeks. We will be revisiting additional ways to engage more people including sponsoring different types of events and partnering with like-minded organizations.

**Next meeting: Wed., Nov. 1, noon. Stone Soup**  
**Chair: Marianne Kast: fourkasts@gmail.com**



**Next meeting: to be announced**  
**Chair: Kay Bertken: kayb@csufresno.edu**

## HOUSING

Matt Jendian, a professor at Fresno State, discussed a Blue Ribbon Committee appointed by the mayor in 2006 to come up with an Action Plan for providing 10,000 housing units by 2010. This approach brought together a coalition of builders, construction workers, city staffs, lenders, realtors, housing advocates (including LWVF), developers, environmentalists and community associations. Affordable housing in Fresno seemed to have been more of a top priority at that time than it is currently.



The committee interviewed two Clovis officials regarding how Clovis deals with affordable housing; next, housing officials for the city of Fresno will do a presentation on affordable housing and the Housing Element of the General Plan.

**Next meeting: to be announced**  
**Co-Chairs: Marianne Kast: fourkasts@gmail.com**  
**Nyla Zender:nylajz@comcast.net**

## EDUCATION



Members are visiting charter schools in Fresno and are amazed at their discoveries. They are talking to administrators, teachers and students and observing in classrooms. Several thousand students are enrolled for various reasons and unique circumstances. The charters are trying to fulfill these needs and appear to be succeeding in varying degrees. A report for members will be published when our observations are complete.

**See front page for Charter School Lunch & Learn**

### PHILIP PEARSON

We regret to note the passing of Philip Pearson, a League member since 2012, on October 3. Philip was 93 and the husband of member June Pearson. He had been an engineer for global dam and highway construction.

## CCLS

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# Natural Resources

by Mary Savala



A confluence of park issues is forming just as the City of Fresno's Draft Updated Parks Master Plan has been released for comment. Plan information is available at: [www.fresno.gov/parksplan](http://www.fresno.gov/parksplan)

and comments are due on November 5. There is a good executive summary which highlights the plan's recommendations.

The Governor of California just signed SB5, the "California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018" to be placed on the June 2018 California Primary ballot. It would authorize \$2.8 billion for the above. Twenty percent of the bond funds are allocated for disadvantaged communities. Among many other allocations is \$6 million for the San Joaquin River Conservancy. The League of Women Voters of California did not support SB 5 in the legislative process.

A coalition of community stakeholders has begun serious conversations, led by the Central California Regional Foundation, to find a

mechanism whereby Fresno parks might fund sustainable revenues for maintenance and operations. Fresno parks need nearly \$5 million dollars a year for maintenance and repair operations; an extra \$10,000 - \$15,000 is needed for each additional acre added to the parks system. LWVF is participating in the discussions.

Four Sustainable Community Strategies



gies are proposed to the public to meet the Green House Gas Reductions target of 13% reduction in Fresno County by 2035. The public is being asked to participate in deciding which transportation scenario they prefer.

## ◆ Scenario A

focuses on maintaining our existing roadways and improving air quality. Residents are provided a range of transportation options such as carpooling, van, pooling, transit and other ridesharing options – making it possible to get where you need to go without always having to rely on your private vehicle.

## ◆ Scenario B

envisioning a region where your home, your workplace, and your shopping options are all close enough that you can take the bus, walk or bike more often. This scenario allocates more growth in the Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan area.

## ◆ Scenario C

reinvests in our region's more disadvantaged communities by encouraging more growth in small cities and rural locations. By focusing on the needs of these sensitive populations, Scenario C improves their access to goods and services.

## ◆ Scenario D

focuses on good repair and rehabilitation of the existing roadway system, increasing investment by widening some roads.

Explore each of the options and go online by November 9 to tell transportation planners which scenario you prefer at

[www.YourVision2042.com](http://www.YourVision2042.com).



# Voter Fraud? Not Here!

by Francine Farber

If you believe that there was voter fraud in Fresno County during the most recent election, you had better change your mind. Brandi Orth, Fresno County's Registrar of Voters, has made it virtually impossible for that to happen. In a Lunch & Learn talk on September 27, she described to a packed audience of LWVF members and guests the many security measures that are in place.

One of the most important things to remember, according to Orth, is that "our ballots are never alone." Layers of technology and in-person check points are numerous to prevent ballots from not being counted, or being counted incorrectly, or improper ballots being cast. It is really an amazing system that is in place, especially when you consider the numbers that are dealt with in Fresno County.

To further ensure authenticity, 44,000 test ballots were run off in June to catch any errors. For the November election, there were 437,000 registered voters in the county, with approximately 172,000 Democrats, 156,000 Republicans, and 86,000 who enrolled as "No Party Preference." Fifty percent of Fresno County citizens are permanent Vote by Mail residents.



There was an army of workers on Election Day 2016, including 1700 in the precincts, 50 field supervisors, 45 staff in the elections warehouse and others. One hundred teams of two people travel to the election sites to get results immediately at closing time. This year there were 230 unique versions of the ballot depending on various districts and language.

## Student Unit

by Lisa Bryant

The Fresno State Student Unit has completed the re-chartering process, had our first meeting, our first tabling event and elected new officers.

The new President is Sonya Pena, who is working on her graduate degree in social work and is a student employee in the College of Social Science academic advising center.

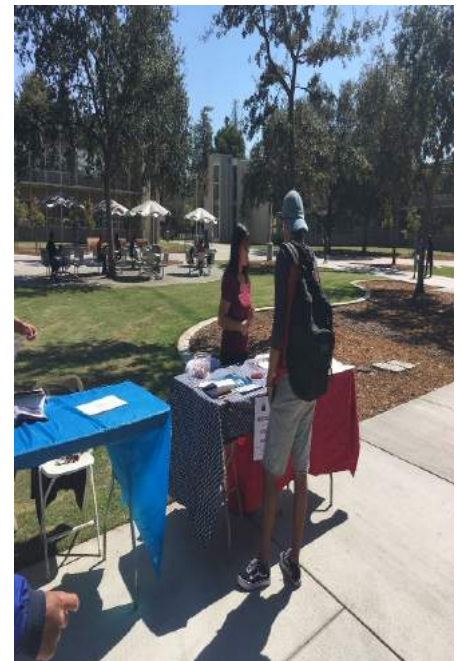
The vice president is Matthew Martinez, who is a senior in political science, and the treasurer is freshman Gurleen Mander. We had several new students sign up already this year.

We held voter registration the week of September 18 and signed up po-

tential new members for the Student Unit.

At the first meeting we discussed hosting public education information sessions about issues or candidate for the 2018 primaries in the spring or that will appear on the 2018 general election ballot.

The students are also interested in having an information session on what universal healthcare would look like in California and what it would mean in terms of state and personal economic impact for students. We discussed inviting people from the healthcare industry, as well as sponsors of the legislation, to speak at a public forum at Fresno State.



Student Unit member and acting secretary Isabel Hernandez registering voters and recruiting members at Fresno State

# Education

by Kay Bertken



## NEXT FUSD BOARD MEETINGS

Wednesday, November 8 & 15 5:30 p.m.

VIEW IT STREAMING ON YOUR COMPUTER

Once again a major focus of attention at Board meetings was Trustee President Brooke Ashjian, his remarks regarding the district's sex education curriculum and his wrangling with the LGBTQ community. At the meeting on October 11, the single item on the main agenda was one placed by a local group of ministers, calling for Ashjian's censure or removal from his Board office.

After many members of the audience addressed the Board, Carol Mills announced that although she did not agree with Ashjian's comments, he was exercising his appropriate free speech rights. Other Board members suggested that while Ashjian certainly had the right to free speech, he also was subject to the consequences of that speech. Chris DeLaCerde charged that Ashjian violated a number of Board bylaws committing him to respect the diversity of the community and district.

**The item was listed for discussion only. No action was taken. Ashjian's term as president is up in December. Since the Board offices are now rotating positions, he will vacate the position soon whether the trustees determine to vote on the issue.**

### English Learners and Math Achievement

At the earlier meeting in October, the agenda actually focused on the students of the district, the progress of the English Language Learner students and the generally poor math achievement scores of the district.

The update on English Language Learners represented a progress report on a task force master plan developed in 2016. Roughly 38% of FUSD students (27,065) are currently English Learners or Redesignated English Learners who have tested out of further services. Interestingly the Redesignated students have scored better and shown more improvement on both math and English Language proficiency tests in 2016 and 2017 than their English only classmates. Among the English learners, however, only 3.7% are on grade level in English Language and only 5.4% in math, slightly improved since 2016, but way behind the statewide averages.

The District is expanding a network of lab schools having a focus on strategies addressing English Learners. Improvements in those schools were substantially better than for the district as a whole. In addition, dual immersion programs in English and Spanish have expanded this year at Wawona Middle School and McLane High School. There are plans to have at least one dual immersion site in each high school area. A Hmong after-school language program has had some success at Greenberg and Vang Pao. The District is working to assist teachers and principals to achieve bilingual credentialing to assist with efforts to improve services to this large group of students.

### Some schools have improved test scores

Standardized test results in mathematics indicate that fewer than 25% of FUSD students are proficient. The State results are better (37%), but still poor. The staff presentation provided a review of "best practices" research, and a look at the 25 schools in FUSD which made gains of 10% or more over the last two years. **But not all the news is bad—57 out of 66 elementary schools demonstrated improvements on the 2017 tests; 11 out of 15 middle schools and 3 out of 10 high schools improved as well.**

The district's instructional support team has focused on issues that need to be addressed for our students to improve. They include: 1) making sure that teachers have a deeper understanding of math standards and how to teach concepts; 2) that teachers provide early interventions as soon as students are struggling; 3) that teachers provide feedback that contains a specific action remedy; 4) that the professional learning provided by the district for teachers better balances content and practice; and 5) that school leaders are trained to be attentive to the quality and results of math instruction on their campuses.

**Administrators told the Board that they are working toward a tiered system of supports for math including regular instruction, small groups for those struggling, and individualized tutoring and online help for those with significant needs.**

# Health Care

by Richard Bertken M.D.



If humans veer so easily off-course on such simple issues, it is hard to imagine them handling the almost innumerable considerations

at a steady 20% yearly, with 22 million in place.

In my last column I posed this question about health care reform: **why have our legislators spent decades debating how to pay for health care instead of asking why the bill is so high?**

My answer was that health care costs were high because free market forces were not sufficiently at work in our complex system. Since writing that article, I have been engaged in this thought experiment: could free market forces *ever* play a role in reducing costs and improving services as they do in other sectors of our economy?

## People make bad decisions

The recent awarding of the Nobel Prize in Economics to Richard Thaler provides an important backdrop for this question. Thaler and his predecessors in behavioral economics, notably Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, exposed the disturbing tendency of people to make bad decisions about purchasing goods and services.

Recent, germane examples of this human foible come from studies done on people purchasing Obamacare exchange policies, which showed that the names of the plans—bronze, silver, gold—heavily influenced their decisions. So did the order in which the plans were presented on information pages. Plans that stated the premium cost per week rather than per month were highly favored, even though the premiums were identical.

presented by classical commercial plans. The Affordable Care Act made great progress in simplifying or deleting many of these considerations—pre-existing conditions, maximum out-of-pocket charges, co-pays, coverage for women’s health and childbirth, coverage for psychological disorders. But even Obamacare options (including key issues of physician panels and medication coverage) overwhelm the human intellect and emotional center.

## Easier choices needed

If humans are having trouble making wise decisions about dish soap and paper towels (as I certainly do), we need to make choosing health plans far easier. Health Savings Accounts (HSA’s) emerged from Congress in 2003, touted as remedy for the complexity of health plans as well as a welcome return to the days of yore when ordinary people could pay their own medical bills.

This theoretical return to market forces provides its holders with an exclusion of a portion of their income from taxation—until death—for use to pay for medical bills. Regrettably, the simplicity and free market initiative stops there. An HSA account is *not* insurance, so one must buy a high-deductible commercial health plan and face complexities that rival, if not exceed, those of standard commercial plans. Even though HSA’s are not suitable for many households with low incomes or ongoing medical expenses, HSA’s have been growing

## Insecurity abounds

Our President’s current proposal to undo the Obamacare mandates for qualifying health plans that could be sold across state boundaries takes us back to heightened complexity and insecurity for customers of health plans.

At the same time, weakening the grip that state insurance commissions now hold on licensing insurance plans could be a step forward in reducing our health care bureaucracy and stimulate innovation on a national scale.

## Access for all

In the long term, the roadmap to better health care should be a relentless advocacy of on-the-ground access for all and of transparency of cost and quality. There are promising models that augur a spontaneous evolution of such systems.

Sadly, there are counter-models of monopolism and self-interest. To its credit, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid has, against diverse opposition, sponsored projects to study the performance of a variety of coordinated health systems. We should do more and do it better.



# Neutral on Temperance Flat


by Diane Merrill

The LWVC's Water Position "encourages off-stream water storage, while discouraging the construction of new on-stream dams." The League of Women Voters of Fresno is taking a **NEUTRAL** position on the proposed Temperance Flat Dam and Reservoir, while supporting local projects using multiple strategies to recharge groundwater.

We may continue to participate in the public discussion about the Temperance Flat Dam proposal by asking important questions, such as:

1. Would local water users have rights to the water if the Temperance Flat Dam is built?
2. Would water from this project be affordable for local water users? Or would it go to large water agencies in major metropolitan areas in Southern California or the Bay Area, where water costs could be spread over many more water users?
3. Would sufficient water be available to participating agencies to justify the long term cost of the project?
4. How would water be allocated among the water agencies supporting the proposal? Would the allocations be handled in an equitable manner that meets the needs of the various water users?

**NOTE: If LWVC takes a position on the proposed Temperance Flat Dam, that position would supersede a position taken by LWVF.**



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# Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



Prior to its October meeting the Behavioral Health Board (BHB) held a public hearing on the annual update to the Mental Health Services Act. The Act imposes a 1% income tax on personal income in excess of \$1 million to be used for mental health services.

The plan, several hundred pages long, receives input from the community and board members during the year. These concerns are incorporated into the plan update. The BHB voted to approve the plan as presented. It will now be sent to the County Board of Supervisors for approval before being sent to the state.

An extended discussion occurred about the Holistic Center and the alternative therapies that are practiced there by various ethnic groups. It was requested that at a future meeting, the BHB have a review of that program, a presentation of data, and a discussion of ways in which the program is evaluated. In addition, information will also be presented regarding a behavioral health program for veterans and women with post-partum depression.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to a Community Forum, during which community members were invited to address the board on any concerns related to mental health or substance use disorders.

## Next Board Meeting

Wednesday, November 21, 2:30 p.m.

Sierra Building, 1925 East Dakota, Fresno

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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.

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