

Phone: 559-226—VOTE

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www.lwvfresno.org

THE

FRESNO VOTER

Our 86th Year



Tuesday, November 4
Special Election

Saturday, November 8
Volunteer Brunch

Monday November 10
Regular Board Meeting
4 p.m. Stone Soup

Monday, December 8
Regular Board Meeting
4 p.m., Stone Sop

Happy Thanksgiving
November 27



We'd like to honor you!

Thank you for volunteering with the League.

Please join us for brunch

Saturday, November 8, 9:30 a.m.

at Stone Soup

RSVP 559-226-8683 (League Office)



Co-President's Message

by Kay Bertken



If you have any doubts about the security of our elections, talk to a League member who works answering phones or opening ballots for the Elections Office. Starting well before this November's special election day, we were at the downtown office and at the elections warehouse, witnessing the care given to every voter and ballot.

Calls from voters who did not get their ballots or who tore or lost them are sent another if there is time; or they are directed to a nearby vote center. Many who worry that their ballot might not have been received are often prematurely anticipating the ballot delivery. They are reassured when we can tell them that it has been processed or that they can keep calling to check and could get another ballot or vote in-person if the time stretches between submission and processing. It is the case that only the first ballot processed from a voter will count. That surprises voters who may be convinced that someone can game the system by voting multiple ballots.

Some calls come from people worried that they have signed their ballot with or without a middle name, and their vote won't count. The signature on file with the elections office is their driver's license (and commonly used) signature. A middle name—whether included or not—will rarely influence the validity of the signature which relies primarily on handwriting.

Meanwhile in the warehouse, our members unfold ballots in a secured area where no bags, pens, pencils or phones are allowed. There is a clear visible space beneath the tables where we work. No workers can mark up ballots, hide extra ballots or discard ballots under tables—be assured those worries are false. Observers who come to the warehouse can see what is happening to ballots at each step of the process.

Some ballots that come into the warehouse have not been treated with the respect we give them, arriving torn or with food stains or signatures (not a secret ballot) or random pen marks in the margins that can't be read by the machines that count the vote. Even

(continued on page 4)

The Voter is a monthly publication of the LWV Fresno

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October 2025

Volunteers: We will hold an appreciation brunch on Saturday morning, November 8 at Stone Soup.

Holiday party: Angela Presto has generously volunteered her home for our holiday gathering from 2-5 pm. on December 7 Board members will provide food.

Orientation and Update for new and experienced members: February: exact date to be decided

Master Chorale: They have invited us to host a table at their concert on Sunday, November 16 at Shagoian Hall. Kay and Robin will attend.

Board Info: We need a secretary to temporarily substitute for Faye. We also are seeking additional board members.

Student Unit: Robin and Kay met with Naomi Bick, Director of the Unit, and Mia Zamora, student president of the unit to discuss working more closely together. They don't have regular meetings but instead plan events together. We provided handouts for the campus registration event this month.

BWOPA: Black Women Organized for Political Action: Robin and Kay attended a meeting where they established potential connections that may lead to some joint activities.

Mural: There are currently no leads for a location. The board may need to set a deadline after which the arts grant will be returned and the artist paid as required for his work to date.

DONATIONS

Generous donations were received this month for the RBG Scholarship from Diana Durham and Pam Runge and for the General Fund from Angela and Mike Presto.

Thank You

LWVF IS A 501 C3 non-profit organization and all donations, including dues, are tax deductible. Please make out checks to LWVF and send to Treasurer, LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno 93710.

Climate Action

by Sandy Aune



A one-hundred-year pit mining proposal by an international company currently has an unfinished Environmental Impact Report (EIR). More than 40 people attended a meeting recently at the River Parkway Trust office to discuss the project's effect and how it can be addressed.

The company, Cemex, is proposing a deep mining operation to include an asphalt mixing plant. The name of the project is "Rockfield Quarry Modification Project." This project will be located on the river, across from Ball Ranch. The pit mine is described as 600 feet deep, and the entire area would stretch for three acres along the river. Cemex is proposing a one-hundred-year mining contract with Fresno County.

Cemex currently has a small operation south of Lost Lake where sand and gravel are mined at surface level, unlike the newly proposed site which will use blasting and a crushing process to turn the blasted rock into gravel.

The San Joaquin River currently is a bucolic environment that provides an open space where native plants, birds, animals and humans thrive. It is a place for urban dwellers to find relaxation, recreation and education. If the EIR is approved and the project is operative, that would no longer be the case.

The date of the EIR approval is unknown. The best grassroots effort to make now is to write a letter to your Fresno County Supervisor. Below is a list of topics that were discussed at the meeting and that you can incorporate in your letter as you wish.

- Noise, air and light pollution
- Truck traffic on Friant
- The length of the proposed contract with Cemex
- The proximity of the mining pit to the river
- Cemex does not have a stellar safety and environmental record in other places where it has mining projects.
- The extractions of gravel will not benefit Fresno County as it already has a 50-year supply of sand and gravel.

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Housing

by Marianne Kast



The grand opening of Heritage Estates, a 33-home subdivision of 3 and 4-bedroom homes located at Walnut and Florence Avenues in West Fresno, will be celebrated on November 11 at 11:30 a.m. Twenty-five of the homes are permanently reserved for first-time homebuyers earning less than 80% of Fresno's median income, or about \$40,000 to \$63,000 annually.

The City of Fresno's part in this project was applying for a \$3 million dollar State housing loan which the Housing Authority applied to the \$12 million dollar total project cost. The City also is providing \$1.4 million dollars in accumulated local housing funds for mortgage assistance to buyers.

The Fresno City Council finally approved the 82-unit market rate apartment complex originally proposed in 2021 for Herndon and Prospect Avenues in northwest Fresno, wisely choosing to comply with a state judge's order to do so. In 2015, the land at that intersection was rezoned from a neighborhood shopping district to multi-family use. When the developer proposed this project, there was little the City could legally object to since statewide legislation over recent years has streamlined the process for building multi-family units where zoning permits that use. However, in response to vocal neighbors, Councilperson Karbassi led the failed fight against this project, and he and Councilperson Maxwell were the 2 votes still opposing the 4-2 approval last month.

In more good news for housing, the City of Fresno has published a Request for Proposals (RFP) for modular housing that would adjoin the new senior center being built on Blackstone Ave. near Ashlan. Modular homes are built almost entirely in a factory. Boxlike modules — complete with walls, floor, ceiling, wiring, light fixtures, cabinets, and HVAC system — are trucked to the construction site, lifted by crane, and plopped onto a foundation. Generally, modular homes are less expensive, "greener" since the building process emits fewer emissions than traditional building, and they can be built in about half the time.

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Co-President's Message

(continued from page 2)

those ballots will be processed if the vote on the issue can be determined (some few people mark all available bubbles); but first they have to be duplicated by two election staff workers, one watching the other.

If you have never volunteered with us to work on an election, the June primary is coming up, and we will need your help. The earnest concerns of voters to have their vote counted and the process that makes that happen is a joy to witness. *Key*



**Special Election
November 4**



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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Behavioral Health

by Sherri Gibson



Proposition 1 narrowly passed in March of 2024. This proposition makes statutory changes to update the state's behavioral health system and provides a bond to build mental health treatment residential settings in the community. This is intended to address supportive housing for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness and those with behavioral health conditions including the populations noted above.

New mandates include no new money for services but involve reallocation of current funding. The source of funding remains the same "Millionaire's Tax" that voters passed in 2004, just reprioritized and with more prescriptive mandates for funding. It prioritizes children and adults who are chronically homeless or at risk of homelessness or are or at risk of being in the justice system. Thirty percent of funding is allocated to housing interventions. Another funding prioritization is for early intervention services to youth 25 years and younger.

Counties are required to address the following goals: increase access to care, reduce homelessness, institutionalization, justice involvement, removal of children from home, and untreated behavioral health conditions. These new mandates address significant problems and involve onerous administrative and reporting requirements.

One of the required components for continuum service categories is resident treatment services. Fresno County has identified four projects in this category. One of these would be a peer respite overnight stay program. This is designed for a short stay of a few days and could be used as respite for care givers.

The other residential programs are three Social Rehabilitation facilities. Two would be crisis residential treatment social rehabilitation facilities for adults. One would be a social rehabilitation facility which provide longer lengths of stay as well as structured mental health treatment and focus on life skills for transition to independent living. These three residential programs combined would provide 58 beds.

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Health Care

by Richard Bertken M.D.



Last November I wrote a column on what I called, out of politesse, “vaccine hesitancy (VH for short).” In that article I advocated advertising the benefits of vaccination programs to all members of a society. To claim citizenship in this shared community, one should feel obligated to contribute to its health (and possibly survival) through vaccination. I also called attention to society’s obligation to strengthen indemnification systems for the rare victims of serious vaccination reactions and injuries—the “we’ve got your back” message.

RFK Jr.’s message was this: “I am firing all the members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.” My appeal to the societal conscience of VH people was, it turns out, naïve. About 14% of residents of all advanced democracies report personal VH beliefs that seldom alter over time.

One component of the VH belief portfolio is resistance to government imposition of requirements for medical treatments. But why does the overall safety and effectiveness of vaccination fail to register with the VH population? This resistance to vaccine safety/efficacy data lies in the VH community’s susceptibility to misinformation and conspiracy belief. This may be an individual personality characteristic that expands when combined with a shared and purposeful think-alike community.

Public health officials, social psychologists, and educators have all contributed to the emerging canon that the suppression of VH and other harmful beliefs lies in prevention through early participatory training now known as “prebunking.” Debunking is the ongoing fact-checking and refuting of misinformation, disinformation, and whoppers. Debunking does not work if it’s not seen or heard or is reflexively rejected. Therefore the need for early, practical, stepwise experience in identifying deliberately misleading posts, articles, video, or sign age—“prebunking.”

Recent scientific research is showing that schoolchildren can be trained to recognize even very subtle misinformation after a few training sessions devoted to identifying manipulative content. California Assembly Bill 873 (signed by Gov. Newsom in late 2023) mandates media literacy training in all elementary and secondary schools in the state.

No doubt this curriculum of skeptical analysis of commercial and political claims will encounter resistance based on “suppression of free speech” and supposed “indoctrination.” However, we desperately need countervailing forces against the anti-vax bilge that haunts the on-line and traditional media.

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BERNICE STONE

Bernice Stone passed away in October after a lifetime of teaching in public school classrooms. Eventually she became a professor in special education, spearheading innovations in teacher training at Fresno State.

Bernice was an avid reader who enjoyed world travel, theater and music. She was one of our League’s treasured Life members, having belonged to our organization for more than 50 years.

NYLA ZENDER

Nyla Zender passed away on October 1 at the age of 82. She was a native of North Dakota; her father was a superintendent of schools and her mother a school librarian so it was no surprise that she became a teacher with a master’s degree in microbiology. She taught AP biology and chemistry at San Joaquin Memorial High and loved her students.

From 2013 to 2017 she served as president of our League and was a member since 1979.

Her memorial service will be held at St. Paul Newman Center on December 4 at 10 a.m.

Education

by Kay Bertken



Against a backdrop of federal cuts to education and especially the division at the Education Department responsible for testing and data gathering, fairly dismal national, state and local testing results have been released. While there are arguments about whether standardized tests are unbiased or even appropriately measure student abilities, the scores are nonetheless the major access we have to consistent comparisons across time and place.

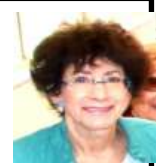
The most recent state test scores (2024-2025) for Fresno Unified students show a modest improvement, up about 2% in math and about 2.4% in English Language Arts (ELA) in the percentage of students who exceeded or met proficiency standards. Fresno Unified scores were well below the state numbers: 37.11% of Fresno students met or exceeded standards in ELA compared with 48.8% in the state; and in math, 27.15% of Fresno students compared with 37.3% in the state. The bad news is that both district and state scores show that more than half of California students are failing to meet traditional academic expectations.

The distribution of scores across California and in Fresno Unified reveal what has been a consistent disparity by ethnicity. Whereas 61.8% of California students and 51.63% of Fresno students who identified as white met or exceeded standards in ELA, the scores of students of color were lower. Only 32.75% of African American students across the state and 23.45% in Fresno met those benchmarks. Among Latino students, the numbers were 38.84% for the state and 35.49% in Fresno. A similar pattern exists in the math scores: state and local scores for white students in math exceeded both Hispanic and African American scores.

A national testing program(NAEP), an every-other-year assessment of reading and math scores produced by the Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, released its 2024 findings. These scores were down since 2022 (except for the highest performing students) and significantly lower than the very first NAEP testing in 1992. The lowest performing students were at historic lows, a decline that started a decade ago

Voter Services

by Sue Goldman



Most people know who your U.S. senators are. If you have wondered who some of your other government representatives are, here are some ways to find out.

Assembly.ca.gov – This website will tell you who your state assembly person is as well as your state senator. Go to the website, click on members and then click on Find Your Representative. Then input your address. The first name that will come up is your assembly representative. You can then click on the senator box and get that person's name. Accompanying the names are a listing of the counties that district encompasses as well as a map of the district.

Fresnocountyca.gov – Go to the website, then click on Find Your District, input your address and you will see a listing for all these positions: County Supervisor, City Council, state senator and assembly reps, Board of Education, Community College, Unified School District, Irrigation District.

Fresno.gov - I did not find the city council website to be user friendly. When you go to the website, click on City Council. At the bottom of that page, you can click on City Council District Locator. On that page you can input your address. However, when I did that it I got a pop-up that said there were no results for my address. It was easier to use the county website.

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and that largely reflected proportionately high numbers of disadvantaged students.

Fresno Unified trustees have set ambitious long-range reading goals focused particularly on students who do not meet standards. According to their own more frequent testing program (I Ready which is highly correlated with the state testing results) 46 elementary and middle schools are on track this year to meet those goals while 38 are not. The administration is working with those schools to provide the help and resources they might be missing.

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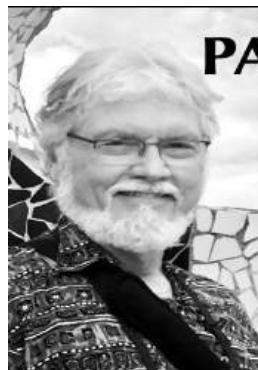
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Men and Women age 16 and above Making Democracy Work

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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 - \$75 is the recommended amount. However you can choose an amount, with \$20 being the least you can pay. Renew online at <https://portal.lwv.org/>

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