

Observer Corps 2026 Mid-Year Report

Abraham Lincoln, in his Gettysburg Address, reminded us that ours is a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” All government, including local government, exists for our benefit. It is accountable to us, the citizens. We, as citizens, have the responsibility to hold our elected officials accountable.

Our League of Women Voters Observer Corps attends and monitors the meetings of the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors, Sonora City Council, and the Tuolumne Utilities District Board (TUD). We follow the issues, the decisions, and the processes of each agency. On a semi-annual basis we share our findings with the public and the agencies. The following is our mid-year report, covering January 2026 through June 2026.

Process, the manner in which a board conducts itself, is essential for any agency to function well. This includes parliamentary procedure, the Brown Act, and interactions of board members with each other, staff, and audience members.

Ideally, all public meetings are conducted with civility and respect toward all members, staff, presenters, and the audience. Unfortunately, this has not consistently occurred. We have witnessed bickering, name calling, berating of staff in several agency meetings. We have observed board members launch personal attacks, interrupt and be rude to each other, to staff, and to presenters. Our citizens deserve better from our elected officials.

The Brown Act is a California law that mandates open and public meetings for all state agencies. It ensures transparency and accountability. We suggest an annual review of the Brown Act for all three agencies. Specifically, regarding the Board of Supervisors, we have been concerned about personal agendas, recusals, and closed session protocols. The January election of the Board chair and the mobile home park discussions have raised questions about personal agendas, conflicts of interest, recusals, and closed session protocols.

All three agencies are diligent about posting their agendas at least 72 hours before their meetings, as mandated by the Brown Act. The websites of both the Sonora City Council and TUD allow quick and easy agenda access that is simple to print out. Changes to the County website have made access to the Board of Supervisor's meeting agendas and supporting documents difficult. While one can print out a copy of an amended agenda, printing a copy of the full Board agenda is challenging. Additionally, we are concerned about the site user sign in request which can limit public access and raises questions about the site user's right to privacy. The public deserves a more streamlined, easy to print out Board agenda access process.

Each of these three agencies as stewards of the public trust have a responsibility to the public. The Supervisors, Directors, and Council Members are elected public servants. They are answerable to us, the citizens. As citizens, we expect our elected officials to model cooperative, responsible leadership. We ask that they meet this challenge.