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**The**

**FRESNO**

**VOTER**

*Our 81st Year!*



**1. Candidate Forum**

**2. Proposition Workshop**

Monday, October 3, 4 p.m.

**NOTE CHANGE OF DATE**

Regular Board Meeting  
LWVF Stone Soup Office

Saturday, October 8

Candidate Forum  
11 a.m. on ZOOM

Tuesday, October 11

Proposition Workshop  
5:30 p.m. on ZOOM



Guests are welcome to all  
League meetings and events

LET'S TALK ABOUT  
**PLAN(ET)**  
**A**

SAN JOAQUIN  
VALLEY  
CONGRESSIONAL  
CANDIDATE FORUM

Sat, Oct 8  
11 am - 1 pm  
via Zoom &  
Instagram Live

Type link below  
in browser

Congressional candidates will discuss their  
positions on a variety of environmental issues  
Moderated by Juanita Stevenson, Executive Producer, Valley Works  
sjv\_candidate\_forum.eventbrite.com



SCAN  
**ME**



**Propositions**

**Demystified**

**Gambling**

**Arts**

**Measure C**

**Emissions**

**Dialysis**

**Tobacco**



**Saturday, October 11**

**5:30 p.m. on ZOOM**

**Led by Sue Goldman & Robin Chiero**

**Go to Zoom.com. Click on Join**

**Enter meeting ID: 88181933148**

## Co-President's Message



Our own extraordinary climate in September-- plus the noise of political campaigns, information and disinformation overload, the arguments around investigations of our former President-- has made it easy to succumb to pessimism. It is hard to believe we can focus on any problems, let alone cooperate for our common good. However, some very good news on a not-so-small front happened during this California heatwave.

The State's grid operator issued a statewide alert, pinging cell phones across the state warning of potential rolling blackouts if residents did not cut back on their energy usage. Within 45 minutes usage dropped by a huge amount—enough to power 2,000,000 homes. People responded! We listened and cooperated for our personal and common benefit! There was no statewide crisis.

There has been criticism of Governor Newsom for his part in this, including the common accusation of government overreach. Interestingly, critics couldn't seem to agree whether the warning itself was needlessly intrusive or California's grid was poorly managed. But condemning a timely and successful government action followed by an appropriate citizen response that averted a huge problem is a sign of our crazy times. This achievement should be celebrated. It is reassuring that we can cooperate and respond appropriately to a crisis.

The need for working together to solve our common problems has never been greater. On a local League level, over these last months, we have been working with other community groups. We partnered with Building Healthy Communities, Leadership for Justice and Accountability and other groups in an ultimately unsuccessful, but nonetheless impactful, effort to reform the Measure C tax measure before it went on the November ballot. We will be continuing to reach out to these and other local organizations to extend our League's impact on issues of common interest.

Inter-group cooperation has been marking multiple local achievements. A \$65 million-dollar federal grant to advance agriculture technology is coming to the area thanks to the F3 coalition. That group includes some historical antagonists--university researchers, farmers, agricultural organizations, community colleges and manufacturers alongside the Central Valley Community Foundation.

*(continued on page 5)*



September 2022

**Special Events:** The Board finalized arrangements to welcome the Executive Director of the Air Pollution Control District. The Board also planned for an October 11 members meeting to explain state and local propositions

**Honorees:** Ashley Swearengin, Devin Connor and Armida Mendoza were given one-year memberships in recognition of their achievements honored on Women's Equality Day.

**Election:** Kay Bertken is having yard signs made that will be placed in public places at colleges and elsewhere to enable people to register on site. In addition, several hundred copies of Easy Voter have been ordered from the state in both English and Spanish and will be distributed at nursing homes, libraries, etc.

**Transportation:** The Board voted to contribute \$12,000 in donated funds to the Fresno County Rural Transit Authority for its innovate electrification program. *See story on pages 4 and 5.*

**Voter Services:** Members and friends will be asked to volunteer to open ballots and staff phone lines at County election headquarters.

**Generous donations were received from Jacquie Canfield, Louise Richardson, and Howard Watkins**

**Generous donations for the RBG fund were received from Kay Bertken, Diane Merrill and Nyla Zender.**



***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. Donations for RBG should note RBG in the memo line. 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 Voter is a monthly publication of the League of Women Voters of Fresno**

**Mailing address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710**

**Volume 81 No. 10 Editor: Francine M. Farber**

# Education

by Kay Bertken



At several Board meetings last school year, members of the public communicated that the Board never spent any time talking about the educational program. In response to this allegation, the Board met in a special workshop on “Academic History and Status Focused on Our Core Business.” The meeting focused on the most recent measures of academic achievement compared with the previous four years which had shown modest but steady improvements on multiple measures.

With the caveat that the 2021-22 state tests were not exactly equivalent to the previous measures (they were an abbreviated version), district test results showed relatively consistent declines from the 2019-20 results (there was no testing in 2020-21). With some notable exceptions, scores in English Language Arts and mathematics had declined to just 32.9% of students meeting or exceeding standards overall in ELA and 20.7% in math. Declines were evident in all areas of the district and at all school levels. News reports from across the country have revealed the same kind of learning loss during COVID shutdowns.

The workshop was candid in its discussions—showing test results from all areas of the district and for all schools. Historical comparisons with other large urban California districts were also shared, with Fresno notably lower in achievement than Long Beach, San Diego and the state as a whole. Fresno students are burdened with much higher levels of poverty (87.9%) and many more foster children (1%) than the comparison districts. The most recent data is not yet available to compare Fresno test score declines with others.

The district has been in the news because of an elementary school principal shoving a child to the ground and a hoax active shooter report at Bullard High. Superintendent Nelson spoke passionately at the Board meeting: first to indicate his own concern and anger over the two incidents, but also to communicate the dangers of both—to a child and a disrupted and traumatized school community. Although the sham shooter call went out to multiple schools in the state and is unlikely to be traced locally, Nelson indicated that previous false alarm calls had been traced and prosecuted. He issued a call to parents and students to monitor phone messaging.

*kaybertken752@gmail.com*

# Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



The long-awaited Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program (AOT), otherwise known as Laura’s Law, is scheduled to begin on October 3. Turning Point of Central California holds the contract to run the program. Individuals who are unable or unwilling to accept mental health treatment and who have been involuntarily hospitalized or incarcerated numerous times are eligible for the program. Family, friends, and other involved persons may refer the individual to the AOT Program. Referral forms may be found on the Department of Behavioral Health’s and Turning Point’s web sites. For further assistance call Turning Point at 559-274-0299.



September was National Suicide Prevention Month. In Fresno we recognize the month with a proclamation from the Board of Supervisors and many educational outreach events. The Behavioral Health Board took the opportunity for a virtual Site Visit with the Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors (LOSS) Team. The Team provides support, information, and resources to those individuals who are affected by the suicide of another person.

In Fresno County there are approximately 100 suicides per year, or 2 per week. When a death is ruled a suicide at the scene, First Responders call the LOSS Team. A peer volunteer (who has lost a loved one to suicide) and a mental health clinician report to the scene 24/7, usually within 45 minutes. Survivors are offered individual or group counseling sessions, as well as grief support groups. Care plans for survivors usually extend for 13 months, but may continue longer. Often survivors are not ready for help immediately, but may ask for help at any time. People wishing support may call the LOSS Team at 559-248-8579 or 559- 322-5877.

September also was National Alcohol & Drug Addiction Recovery Month. Hosted by Community Partners 4 Recovery, SoberStock is held annually in Fresno to celebrate recovery from addiction. There is a car show, music, and information tables on site. This year the event was held at Eaton Plaza on September 24.

*evansalca@comcast.net*

# LWVF co-sponsors project to support transportation in rural Fresno County

by Francine Farber

**U**nder an innovative plan that will be the first in California and first in the nation, residents in unincorporated communities in Fresno County will be able to get rides to medical appointments and other destinations in a Chevy Bolt electric vehicle at a reasonable cost.

The plan is the brainchild of the Fresno County Rural Transit Agency (FCRTA) in coordination with their service provider MV Transportation and the Biola Community Services District. Each EV will be housed in the community it serves and will be driven by a trained and licensed driver who is a community resident. Thus the plan will provide both transportation and jobs for local residents who previously have been underserved by public transit.



Moses Stites

The League of Women Voters of Fresno is one of a number of partners in the project. Our involvement came about in the following circumstances.

Two of our generous members provided funds to be used to support a League interest. Board members had read about a young man who started an Uber-type service for rural residents who had little or no transportation options but the plan was in trouble because of costs due to geographic and time constraints. When we approached Moses Stites, the General Manager of the Fresno County Rural Transit Agency to see whether we

could help this service, we were informed about the electrification project that was being developed. We decided to invest in this project as the league has long-standing positions on accessible transportation and equity for all populations. In consultation with the Transit Agency's leadership we decided to contribute \$12,000 from the donated funds. The money came from the estate of Shirley Valett and from an anonymous current League member.

A pilot program will begin in Biola on October 3. Riders will require a 24 advance reservation via a 1-800 phone number. The service will be available six days a week from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. subject to driver availability. If successful, the plan will be extended to other unincorporated communities in Fresno County that will replicate a similar program including resident drivers and a Chevy Bolt.

To service its fleet of eventually 122 EV vehicles and address electrification needs, the FCRTA is planning construction of a state of the art facility in Selma with federal and Measure C funding. The facility will contain a maintenance shop, an office building, bus wash, tire storage and canopy, and hazardous material storage. The anticipated completion date is October 2023.



This is the future . . .

and it's already here!



## Vehicle Infrastructure

- ◆ Fleet of 122 vehicles
- ◆ 44 powered by CNG (compressed natural gas)
- ◆ 33 powered by electric batteries
- ◆ FCTA does not operate any diesel vehicles
- ◆ Goal is to have 100% electric by 2030

## Charging Infrastructure

- ◆ 24 Envision Solar arcs (Level 2)
- ◆ 4 BYD (Bykd Your Dream) Charger (Level 2)
- ◆ 8 Proterra Chargers (Level 30)
- ◆ 25 Juice Box Chargers (Level 20)
- ◆ 2 Envision Solar Trees (Level 3)



**Level 1 chargers** are a slow charge and can plug into a wall outlet.

**Level 2** typically use AC (alternating current) power and allow for increased charging speed so they charge faster than a level 1. Level 2 are the chargers most commonly found at a public charging station.

**Level 3** are fast chargers and are DC (direct current) chargers. They provide the quickest charge.

There are different brands of chargers because with some vehicles and buses you can only use one type of charger.

One of 18 Chevy Bolts Owned by Fresno County Rural Transit Agency

**JOIN US FOR**

**Transportation & Tacos**

August 17th 5PM - 7PM  
Biola Chamber of Commerce  
12535 G Street  
*Food and Beverages will be served*

Tell us about your transportation needs for a taco and a chance to win a gift card!

TAKE THE SURVEY

HTTPS://SURVEY.ALCHEMER.COM/53/6075034/BIOLA-ENG

English Survey
Spanish Survey
Hmong Survey

**FCRTA** Fresno County Rural Transit Agency

**Biola residents were invited to a "Transportation and Taco" event to complete a survey on their transportation needs. This was part of extensive community outreach with social services organizations.**

## Progress on the county's General Plan

by Radley Reep

In 2006 the County of Fresno initiated a process to review and revise the General Plan. That project is now in its seventeenth year. The County will hold public hearings in early 2023 to approve a plan update. In anticipation of those hearings, the League filed a Public Records Act request asking to inspect all public comments related to the pending update.

In September the League received from the County fifteen electronic folders with over 700 files, of which approximately 200 are relevant to the League's inquiry. The League is reviewing these documents for the dual purpose of learning more about the plan update and determining if additional documents should be requested.

### Webpage under revision

The County is extensively revising its webpage for the update of the General Plan. The revision, which now should be up and running, will include an update of the timeline for updating the General Plan.

The County has released for public review the draft of a new document titled *Guidance Document for Community Plans & Prioritization Criteria*. It is slated to become a chapter in the General Plan and is to serve as a framework for both the update of existing community plans and for the creation of new community plans. The County held a Zoom meeting last month to introduce the draft document to county residents and to receive feedback. It is available at [www.fresnocountyca.gov/communityplans](http://www.fresnocountyca.gov/communityplans).

### Community plans will be ranked

Once County planners are satisfied with the content of the Guidance Document, they will use the document's prioritization criteria to rate the County's ten unincorporated community plans and rank them from most eligible to least eligible for an update. Staff is hoping to get Board approval of the draft Guidance Document and staff's recommended ranking in January or February of 2023.

The County is not directly contributing to the cost of updating any community plans. Staff has been directed to look for funding from the state, and at present, staff estimates there are grant funds available to update just one of the County's more than thirty antiquated land use plans.

## Air pollution control challenging in area

Interested members and guests heard Samir Sheikh, Executive Director of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, speak about continuing issues with environmental safety last month.

With our area being the most challenging in the nation because of geography, business and transportation factors,



**Samir Sheikh**

Sheikh noted that the district has adopted numerous plans and strategies to address federal standards and improve air quality and public health. Stationary source emissions, i.e. from gas stations and other fixed sites, have been reduced by over 90%. Mobile sources of emissions are largely under state and federal standards, such as interstate trucking, rail and aviation. He said that diesel trucks cause 40 to 50% of our air pollution.

Despite improvement there are still significant concerns about air quality, as evidenced by audience questions. Much more work remains to be done to address issues of premature mortality, increased hospital admissions for heart or lung causes, bronchitis, asthma, respiratory symptoms, ER visits and restricted activity days.

**F. Farber**

### Sylvia Ames

Sylvia Ames, a member since 2018, passed away on August 19 at age 100. Sylvia was a passionate follower of political news and a supporter of women's right to vote. An ardent golfer, she was proud of having scored a hole-in-one.

### Jean Evans Thompson

Jean Evans Thompson passed away at 105 on April 15. She had been a League member many years ago and was interested in social justice. She had also been president of the San Joaquin Valley Town Hall.

# Healthcare

by Richard Bertken M.D.



The Controlled Substances Act of 1970 made simple possession of certain dangerously addictive and psychedelic drugs—"Schedule I drugs"—a crime. Other dangerous but useful agents (Schedules 2-4) were limited to prescription by physicians using them according to standards based on clinical research. Possession of these agents without a prescription or a specific license is also a crime.

The existing categorization of controlled agents has been challenged on several fronts, most notably by the varying degrees of legalization of marijuana by the states. But the recent effectiveness of psychedelic, medically monitored "trips" in treating severe depression has also suggested the need to revisit Schedule I.

In 1973, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), was created to police the Act. This included licensing and monitoring of production, transport, and prescription of controlled agents. The ultimate arbiter of the DEA's performance is the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) of the Justice Department.

In 2019 the OIG released a reproachful analysis of the DEA's performance in response to the opioid epidemic through the preceding two decades. During these years, the annual U.S. death rate from overdoses averaged about 35,000 but grew continuously to almost 100,000 by

2020. Meanwhile, the DEA did not respond to data showing a dramatic increase in the production and sales of oxycontin, initially the chief drug causing deaths. The recent acceleration in overdose deaths is due to a migration of opioid addiction from oxycontin to illicit fentanyl, a potent and too-frequently lethal opioid.

To stem opioid deaths, in 2019 the DEA reclassified fentanyl temporarily. It went from Schedule II (a prescribed pain reliever for severe unrelenting pain) to Schedule I (cannot be possessed for any reason). However, the reclassification was allowed to expire because of the drug's unique role in pain treatment. Supplies were also needed for research on optimizing its use and chemical structure.

Research on marijuana and other cannabis products was effectively suppressed for over three decades because of the bureaucratic obstacles to the purchase and transport of marijuana and relatives. In stunning irony, the OIG has repeatedly and tirelessly refused to remove marijuana from its controlled substance status chiefly because of "the failure of research to prove its effectiveness for specific conditions."

While marijuana has both consistent

negative effects on psychomotor functions and occasional negative mood and thought reactions, it compares very favorably with alcohol and nicotine as a "social lubricant". With our current scientific knowledge, there is zero factual support for keeping it on the Schedule I list or on the controlled substance list at all.

For years possession or sale of marijuana provided a proxy violation for arrest, interrogation, and detainment of suspects for other crimes. Often, by itself, it led to incarceration and a criminal record. It was a versatile law enforcement tool disproportionately visited upon the disadvantaged.

Its utility might explain the continued resistance to both individual state and federal legalization. It provides an explanation for the voting patterns in bill HR 3617 in the house of Representatives. This bill would have removed marijuana from the controlled substances list. The bill passed 220 to 202, with 3 (out of 203) Republicans voting yes and 2 (out of 219) Democrats voting no. The bill died in the Senate.

Cultish polarization reigns in our politics. *rbertlen@comcast.net*

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## Water News

by Diane Merrill



The California legislature passed, and Governor Newsom signed into law, Senate Bill 222 authored by Senator Bill Dodd, a democrat from Napa. It will create a statewide Water Rate Assistance Program for low income residents struggling to pay for drinking water and sewage services. It is the first of its kind statewide water rate assistance program in our nation.



Water affordability has been an ongoing problem in California, and became worse during the pandemic when nearly 650,000 residential accounts were unpaid by September 2021. This law aims to make water more affordable to residents and avoid crisis situations such as shutoffs for non-payment. A number of environmental justice organizations supported the bill and were instrumental in getting it passed.

### Details still to be determined

It has taken extensive effort over a number of two-year sessions for the legislature to finally pass this legislation, and many of the details of how it will work are still to be determined. When the governor signed the bill, the program remained unfunded as budget negotiations were still underway.

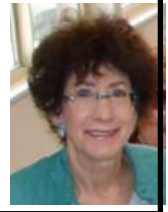
The intent is for The Water Rate Assistance Fund to be established in the State Treasury and also utilize other available state or federal funding. The State Water Resources Control Board is tasked with developing and administering the program. The legislation requires the Water Board to consult with a wide range of stakeholders to establish program guidelines.

### Income guidelines established

Residential ratepayers who meet the income guidelines and receive a bill for water or wastewater service will be eligible for the program. The annual household income guideline is up to 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline level and is also consistent with existing energy assistance programs in California.

## Voter Services

by Sue Goldman



We are now soliciting volunteers to help with the phone bank and ballot opening. Janice Maroot and I will both send out additional requests with specific shifts. Please consider donating some of your time even if it is a small number of shifts. Your service is greatly appreciated both by the League and the Elections Department.

During September Voter Services focused on voter registration and presentations on the state and county propositions. Janice and I staffed a registration table at an apartment complex in southeast Fresno. but were disappointed in the turnout.

This year we were contacted by Bitwise Industries to co-sponsor voter registration on National Voter Registration Day, September 20. We engaged in phone conversations and a Zoom meeting to prepare and gave Bitwise a great many resource websites. Marsha Wagner and Dolores O'Neal staffed the table. While few new people registered, many people came by to check their registration. Bitwise is hoping to make this an annual event. With more lead time next year, the hope is for a better turnout.

Robin Chiero and I presented on the propositions to the Clovis Democratic Club on September 22. We also will be presenting at the Windham Retirement facility. On October 11 we will do a virtual proposition presentation to membership.

*See page 1.  
121143pvct@att.net*

### President's Message *(continued from page 2)*


I have written multiple times about The Children's Movement and the Cradle to Career Partnership. These groups have brought together education, government, health, and non-profit sector players to advance the welfare of children in our county. They are working together now to break down the silos that have separated and stymied so many efforts toward the same goals. We do have reason to hope that consensus and cooperation are not dead. They just need massive encouragement and celebration when they happen.

*Kay*

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*Men and Women age 16 and above Making Democracy Work*

**MISSION:** The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of interested individuals and influences public policy through voter education and advocacy on issues. The League does not support or oppose any candidate or political party.

**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.**

.....  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Ph. \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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