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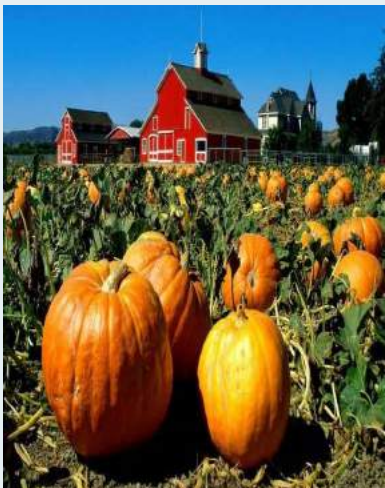
Web site:
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Monday, October 9
Board Meeting
4 p.m. on Zoom
All invited; for link contact
kaybertken752@gmail.com

Thursday, October 26
Member Meeting
5:30 p.m., Stone Soup

Monday, November 13
Board Meeting
4 p.m. in person
Stone Soup



The

Fresno Voter

Our League's 82nd Year!



Artie Padilla

Learn all about an
exciting community
initiative

Thursday
October 26
5:30 p.m.
Stone Soup

Artie Padilla is the CEO of Fresno DRIVE. (*Developing the Region's Inclusive and Vibrant Economy*) This initiative is a 10-year investment plan to develop an inclusive, vibrant, and sustainable economy for residents in the Greater Fresno Region through 14 major initiatives in three investment areas: **Economic Development, Human Capital, and Neighborhood Development.**

How does this all play out for Fresno? What has happened and what is on the horizon?

No reservation required

Members and guests invited, no charge.

Light refreshments will be served.



Co-president's Message



September 2023

In September our voter services volunteers honored National Voter Registration Day and California's High School Voter Education Week by working in the schools to register young voters. General efforts to register voters have also ramped up in anticipation of primary elections in the spring and a presidential election next November. As these efforts continue, some facts about our electorate are worth considering.

Our generally low turnout: According to census data, Fresno County voter registration numbers represent about 69% of the eligible population. In the 2022 midterms, only 44.3% of the registered voters voted, about 34.5% of that year's eligible voters. Overall statewide statistics are a little better but still discouraging; 50.8% of California registered voters actually voted, representing just 41.5% of those eligible. Data on Fresno participation in the June primary of 2022 was much lower; only 27% of registered voters turned out, 21% of the voting age population.

Turnout is better in presidential elections: In the 2020 presidential primary, 42.2% of registered Fresno County voters turned out. In the November general election 74.5% did. Again, those percentages are higher than the number of eligible voters.

Young voters: According to a recent analysis, the youngest voters ages 18 to 29 now represent 31% of the total U.S. electorate, up from 23% in 2016 and just 14% in 2008. Meanwhile, we Baby Boomers and those older have declined in numbers and overwhelming influence: a whopping 61% in 2008 down to 44% by 2020. The potential of younger voters to influence our elections has greatly improved if they were to vote according to their numbers. According to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, in 2022 just 22.1% of eligible 18-29 year-olds in California voted, down 12% from their participation in 2018 and well below the general turnout for that year.

Why our youngest citizens are not voting is the subject of lots of speculation and research. Differences in voting regulations and practices across the United States have been blamed.

(continued on page 6)

Membership: Diana reported that a number of new members join this past month. Each one will be assigned a mentor from the board to be a buddy and encourage their understanding of League issues and how they can become involved using their own interests.

Program planning: Marie reported that plans are in place for our October meeting with speaker Artie Padilla, CEO of the Drive Initiative.

Climate change: Lenore's involvement has led to advocacy for the Farm Bill. (See article page 3) We have sent a request to to LWVUS to allow LWVC to ask local leagues to contact their member of Congress to support allocations for new conservation measures. We are requesting the City Council to publish a climate emergency proclamation to demonstrate it is not ignoring this issue.

Transportation: While participation in our FC Rural project is still relatively low, another driver was hired recently which gives more flexibility to residents and has increased ridership this past month. We voted to send a letter of support for purchasing six electric vehicles.

Greenfield Coalition: We have been asked to sign on to support this new organization. We will ask Keith Bergthold, a leader and one of our members, to speak to us about its goals and policies.

Mural: A muralist has been recommended and will be contacted to discuss the scope of the project and how we might evaluate the artist's plans,

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. Send to Treasurer, LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93705. Thank you.

The Voter is a monthly publication of the League of Women Voters of Fresno
Mailing address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710
Volume 82 No. 10 Editor: Francine M. Farber

Farm Bill needs your support

“A nation that destroys its soil, destroys itself” – FDR

This quote from FDR is as important today as it was in 1937. President Roosevelt was speaking of the Dust Bowl that was caused by poor agricultural practices and drought. The Dust Bowl was 80 years ago, so were the lessons of this era learned? Unfortunately, with conventional agriculture practiced by most farmers today, we still need to heed FDR’s warning.

Did you know that every acre of farmland loses 5.8 tons of topsoil every year in the US on average? On average, farms around the world account for 70% of all water that is consumed annually. Additionally, conventional agriculture practices cause water and air pollution, land degradation, decrease in carbon sequestration, green-house gas emissions, and flooding. And, concentrated animal feeding operations produce massive amounts of manure/waste, and create air and water pollution, including methane.

The LWVC Food, Soil, and Agriculture team created a poster to educate members about how the Farm Bill can help support a sustainable food system in the face of climate change with climate-smart agriculture (CSA). CSA aims to build healthy soil, protect topsoil and water, sequester carbon, and produce resiliency for farmers, (using



cover crops, no tilling, rotational grazing, as well as reduce use of inputs). The USDA has programs to help farmers transition to CSA but was only able to fulfill 30% of requests by farmers that needed technical assistance. The lack of technical assistance and the farm loan model makes it difficult for many farmers, especially small to mid-sized farms, to transition to CSA. Last year, the Inflation Reduction Act aimed to help farmers transition to CSA and other conservation programs by funding \$19.5 billion in investments added to the Farm Bill.

The present Farm Bill 2018 will expire this year. Congress will determine the programs and vote to reauthorize the next Farm Bill at the end of this year or in 2024. In February 2023, the LWVUS joined nearly 650 other organizations in a letter to Congressional agriculture committee leadership, urging them to protect the multi-billion investment in CSA and conservation programs, and to maintain it in the next Farm Bill. *(continued on page 8)*

Water News
by Diane Merrill



(PPIC), and the Central California Community Foundation.

During panel discussions on Managing Water and Farmland Transitions in the San Joaquin Valley, local, state, and federal water managers discussed ways to manage groundwater supplies by increasing groundwater recharge in dedicated recharge and flood control basins, unlined irrigation canals, and spreading excess water flows on farmland.



The discussions were sponsored at Fresno State by Fresno State’s California Water Institute, the Public Policy Institute of California

Repairing major canals that have lost capacity due to land subsidence is also necessary but very expensive. During this year’s storm season, reduced canal capacity resulted in less water that could be moved away from flooded areas to areas that could accommodate the excess water.

On a statewide level, agriculture uses about 40% of the state’s water. A warming climate is raising agricultural water demand and reducing supplies. According to climate scientists, warmer temperatures are increasing evaporative demand from vegetation, including crops, while decreasing storm runoff and available water supplies.

During the 2020-2022 California drought, an estimated 400,000 acres were fallowed in 2021 and 600,000 acres in 2022. This comes at the same time that San Joaquin Valley water agencies are in the process of implementing groundwater sustainability plans required by the 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)

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Health Care

by Richard Bertken MD



Needle exchange

On September 5 the County Board of Supervisors voted 3-2 to permit Saturday-only use of the downtown Public Health Office by the San Joaquin Valley Free Medical Clinic and Needle Exchange. The two votes against approval were motivated by concerns about the appearance of official approval of and even the promotion of intravenous drug abuse. Two members of the city council later echoed this view.

However, research by the National Institute on Drug Abuse has shown that syringe services programs (SSP's) reduce injection addiction, its associated transmitted chronic diseases (notably HIV and hepatitis), and the littering of drug paraphernalia. SSP's provide street-drug testing for both patient safety and public health. They distribute Narcan, an opioid-blocker that can prevent death from overdose. About 200 SSP's are operating in the US. They are the major source of referral for medical drug treatment programs. Most assist access to social and behavioral services. SSP's have spread across the US and 87 other countries since 1988.

Phenylephrine

Recently the FDA has been under fire for massive delays in banning phenylephrine from oral over-the-counter (OTC) decongestant remedies. Since its approval in the mid-70's, oral phenylephrine has traveled a long and winding path toward well-deserved oblivion. Within a decade of its release it was suspected of inefficacy on the basis of everyday clinical experience. Its tablet form failed to relieve

nasal stuffiness as effectively as its cousin, oral pseudoephedrine. By 2007 evidence emerged that oral phenylephrine did not appear in the bloodstream

after ingestion. This was due to its breakdown in the harsh environment of the stomach.

In response, a special FDA panel, the Non-Prescription Drug Advisory Committee (NDAC) astoundingly approved its continued marketing. This decision was not reversed until the NDAC did so early this September, at which point oral drugs containing phenylephrine accounted for 1.8 billion dollars in annual sales.

While this suggests inappropriate entanglement of the FDA with over-the-counter marketers, the history of oral decongestants is complex, and the public demand is intense. The FDA must act definitively and persistently now to minimize the slightest appearance of collegiality with the OTC industry.

Meanwhile, cold and allergy sufferers should choose nasal sprays for their occasional stuffy noses. Products containing oxymetazoline are exceptionally effective for short-term use. For sustained nasal stuffiness in spite of nasal sprays, pseudoephedrine-containing tablets have limited availability via direct request from the pharmacist. Vouchers for limited supplies of the drug, found in the cold/allergy aisle, facilitate this transaction. These logistics result from FDA efforts to stem the channeling of pseudoephedrine into the illicit production of methamphetamine.

Wastewater monitoring; is COVID-19 now endemic?

Testing wastewater for human pathogens is over 70 years old. It was valuable for monitoring the progress of epidemics and of immunization pro-

grams long before the advent of DNA extraction and specification. Most notably it guided polio immunization programs and facilitated the near eradication of that terrible childhood disease.

With progressively more specific DNA analysis and sewage testing protocols over the last decade, wastewater ecology (WWE) emerged as a powerful aid in the management of epidemics. Further refinements driven by Covid promoted WWE's ability to provide rapid, early detection of new or increasing cases without healthcare involvement. It detected the emergence and likely transmissibility of new variants. It informed quarantining, personal protection efforts, vaccine distribution, and medical intervention preparedness.

WWE for Covid is ongoing across the country. In California, one can view graphs of concentrations of virus for about 100 "sewersheds" (counties, cities, neighborhoods, unincorporated communities) at Cal-SuWers Network Dashboard. What is apparent from viewing these graphs is that Covid is not going away. While very irregular over the last year, the recent trajectory of virus quantities across these 100 sites is slowly upward. This is the case for WWE across the US and around the world. In the US, hospitalizations for Covid were up 7% in September.

The message from this data is that Covid is behaving like an endemic disease: similar to "the flu," always lurking and morphing in ways to avoid our immune system. This is not inevitable, however. Everyone should get the new Covid vaccine when they are old enough (over 6 months) and have not had a Covid shot within the last 2 months.

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Voter Services

by Sue Goldman



The voter services committee has been meeting to discuss high school voter registration and putting ads on social media regarding voter registration and engagement. Although the process has been more complex than expected, we still plan on running those ads in the future.



With the support of Fresno County Clerk James Kus, the city council recognized the League in its proclamation honoring Voter Registration Day on September 19; I was there to receive it. Council president Tyler Maxwell spoke appropriately about the League’s history.

We were present at a number of high schools in September for voter registration. Two people tabled at Cambridge High School’s back to school night. Staff asked for registration forms for students. We presented in government classes at Hoover High School and De Wolf High School with a PowerPoint and then handing out registration forms. Edison High School had us table at their site. Building Healthy Communities has cohorts of 19 interns. We were able to present our PowerPoint and have a discussion with these interns.

Since the beginning of Covid, two non-profit organizations have been presenting Zoom discussions with prominent people titled “America at a Crossroads.” A recent session was focused on “Demographics and the Upcoming Elections: Americans Under 25 – An Untold Story,” related to our Voter Services interest. Some facts emerged based on polling and research by the presenters. Youth tend to be issue oriented rather than tribal regarding party affiliation. Their issues are related to the economy, climate, diversity, education, student debt, and high tech. They tend to be more liberal in their attitudes towards gender identity and the abortion issue.

(continued on page 8)



Update or Amendment? Terminology can make a difference

by Radley Reep

What constitutes an update by any other name?

After eighteen years of planning, a comprehensive update of the Fresno County General Plan may be at hand. At a Planning Commission meeting held September 14, the County’s planning staff told commissioners that a final draft would likely be presented to the commission for consideration sometime in October, with adoption by the board of supervisors sometime in November.

However, at that September hearing, when commissioners were asked whether pending changes constituted a “revision” or an “update”, the staff replied, “[The General Plan] was updated in 2000. This will continue to be our Fresno County General Plan. It will have a planning horizon of 2042...and we will update it when it becomes necessary....It’ll be at least ten years before the County thinks about updating this current effort.”

By avoiding calling the new version an update, the county has also avoided going through the official updating process, which would have included a public review and address issues such as the depletion of groundwater, climate change, the decline in ag production and the dying and burning of forests.

Instead of officially updating the 2000 General Plan, the County has chosen to amend it in the hope that it can serve another 20 years — to the year 2042. Is a span of 42 years (2000 – 2042) between updates too long? The Office of Planning and Research provided this guidance: “While there is no requirement for how often to update the general plan, the planning period has traditionally been 15-20 years. Some cities and counties update their general plans as often as every 5 years”

It’s been the County’s practice to update its General Plan every 20 to 25 years. For example, the General Plan was

(continued on page 8)

Education

by Kay Bertken



Next Board Meetings

Wednesday, October 4

Wednesday, October 18

It is hoped that by the time this Voter comes out, the negotiations between the Fresno Teachers Association and the Fresno Unified School District will have yielded a contract, but for now the possibility of a strike looms.

Factfinding report this month

At their September 13 Board meeting, the trustees passed an emergency resolution to empower the superintendent to carry out the state constitutional obligation to provide a safe, secure, and effective educational environment in the event of a “Concerted Refusal to Work.” On July 24 the district and the FTA entered into mediation. After three long days of intense mediated negotiation in the first week of September, no resolution was reached. A fact-finding board has heard the issues and will release its findings in a report within 30 days of the last of those meetings, so likely by the first week of October. The FTA has called for a member vote on October 18 to authorize a strike in the event of a continued lack of agreement.

At their September meeting, the superintendent and trustees made statements encouraging safe driving around schools. There have been a number of recent accidents involving injuries and one student death.



Trustees recognized that help from the city and county was needed to institute traffic calming measures around schools and encouraged parents to write to their local representatives. The district itself will soon be receiving a safe-routes to school

report that will direct them to the particular streets and crossings of concern.

CalKids bank accounts

On a more positive note, the trustees discussed the need to publicize the Cal Kids program, which sets up savings accounts for California children to help pay for post high school education. Low-income students enrolled in first through twelfth grade (61,000 of FUSD students qualify) are eligible for a deposit of \$500. Foster

youth are eligible for an additional \$500 each

6 as are homeless youth. Babies born in California

after July 1, 2022, regardless of income, are also eligible for a deposit. These accounts can be linked to further deposits. Parents do need to register their children.

In meetings this last month, elementary principals presented their initial plans for the literacy campaign to their own area trustees. These plans to achieve literacy by first grade have been developed by the individual schools within a framework and with assistance from the central office. The hope is that these different plans will be tailored to the needs of each neighborhood population and have the buy-in of the staffs at each school. Evaluation of the interventions’ effectiveness was emphasized in questions by the trustees during a Board discussion.



Report on resource officers

Report on resource officers

A recent SRO (school resource officer) report of positive and negative interactions with students prompted another board conversation and set of questions. Twenty-six schools in FUSD are covered by Fresno PD, and another by the County Sheriff’s office—all the district high schools and middle schools. The report indicated a continuing disproportionate number of negative interactions with students of color. The trustees had questions about the extent of SRO training. They are required to go through hours of training by the district. The trustees were clearly frustrated by the report.

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President’s Message *(continued from page 2)*

Discouragement over the perceived ineffectiveness of our political system is blamed by some and the inadequacy of our civic education by others. Whatever the reasons, young people, while highly motivated by current issues, need encouragement and voter education to take advantage of their numbers at the ballot box. These things are what the League is positioned to do.

Kay

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



The Board of Supervisors proclaimed September as Suicide Prevention Month. At its September meeting the Behavioral Health Board (BHB) learned of the many events during the month to call attention to suicide prevention.



In 2016 when our community experienced a cluster of teen suicides, a Suicide Prevention Collaborative was formed. The Collaborative created a Fresno

County Suicide Prevention Plan, created a FresnoCares website, created a LOSS Team, and implemented a follow-up call program. A Lifeline serves as the primary call center for 7 counties, including Fresno. The new number for the suicide and crisis lifeline is 988. In FY 2022-2023 there were a total of 5,275 calls to the lifeline from Fresno.

The Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors (LOSS) Team provides information, support, linkage, and resources to new suicide survivors. First responders call the LOSS Team when a suicide occurs; a therapist and a peer survivor respond to the scene within an hour to support the survivors. The Team follows up with the survivors for up to one year. The funding allocation for suicide prevention programs for FY 2022-2023 was \$1,082,507.

The Substance Use Disorders (SUD) Committee learned about the Bridge program in local hospitals to address the SUD treatment needs of patients who come into the Emergency Department. Health care staff may call for SUD Navigators to assist those in need of their services. If they know of the program, individuals may request services on their own. Navigators assist patients in accessing the treatment they need for their SUD by linking them to the most appropriate programs. In addition, the Navigators who made the presentation to the Committee brought a mannequin and demonstrated the administration of Narcan for an opioid overdose.

This month BHB visited Family Villa that provides 26 Permanent Supportive Housing units for families in which at least one adult family member has a mental health and/or substance use disorder and who meets the HUD definition of homelessness. Currently 29 adults and 69 children (mostly school age) live at Family Villa.

LWVC asks redistricting support

Redistricting, the process of redrawing election district boundaries every ten years to ensure that districts have equal populations, is crucial to our democracy.

AB 764 would strengthen the FAIR MAPS Act (FMA), which prohibits partisan gerrymandering in cities and counties and sets standardized redistricting criteria to ensure interests. AB 1248 would require that the state's larger cities, counties, and educational districts establish independent redistricting commissions (IRCs). Voters and communities should choose their elected representatives, rather than elected officials choosing their voters.

How districts are drawn has the power to determine, for the next decade, whether communities and neighborhoods' shared interests will be fairly represented at varying levels of government.

Please write Gov. Newsom and ask his support for these bills.

Water News *(continued from page 3)*

Requirements include addressing declining groundwater levels, water quality issues, and land subsidence. The Public Policy Institute estimates that sustainable farm management will require a reduction in irrigated acreage. "Implementing SGMA will require augmenting water supplies, pumping less, and reducing irrigated acreage. In the San Joaquin Valley, this could entail following more than 500,000 acres by the early 2040s." Some water agencies are making plans for repurposing fallowed land to alternate uses such as dry-land farming, converting to less thirsty crops, or solar development.

The program uses the Housing First model to house and provide support to its families. Staff links residents to community services to meet individual needs while helping to build independent living skills. Residents pay 30% of their income for rent. The remaining cost is paid by HUD grants, along with some funding from the Department of Behavioral Health (\$8.56/day per unit). Family Villa is located on Bulldog Lane, just down the street from the League office.

We encourage you to complete the Board evaluation at:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BHB-EVAL>

evansalca@comcast.net

BHC leader discusses community goals

by Cathy Caples



President and CEO Sandra Celedon of Building Healthy Communities (BHC) recently shared with LWVF members and guests its vision to build a healthier community through the leadership of community members. BHC is a coalition of residents, young people, community, and faith-based organizations working together to create #OnehealthyFresno, where all children and families can live healthy, safe, and productive lives.

They are led by eight values: community voice, leadership by people of color, youth voice, solidarity, inclusion, equity, collaboration and accountability. Based on these values, they use a community organizing model to work in four key areas; strategic advocacy and collective action, fostering civic engagement and leadership; elevating the stories of our community; and strengthening community-based organizations.

BHC has focused its work on Fresno census tracts south of McKinley, between Marks and Peach. In this area, there are 95,00 people; 90% are persons of color and 100 languages are spoken. 35% of residents are under age 18 and adults 18-45 make up 50% of the population. Here are some examples of their community impact:

Housing- They influence housing policy that results in quality, affordable, and accessible housing for working class people. During Covid, they provided \$2.5 million in direct assistance to residents.

Health - During Covid and working in collaboration with 8 immigrant serving organizations and the Fresno County Health Department, BHC deployed 135 community health workers to assist with vaccines. Six out of the eight organizations retained community health workers.

Transportation -LWVF works most closely with BHC on advocacy campaigns. Both are currently navigating a process for a new measure C after the PAC created by BHC helped defeat the 2022 initiative. The goal of the next Measure C is to address climate, connectivity, and healthier air.

Youth: BHC provides \$20,000 in **DACA scholarships** to students. Since research has found that if you engage a youth at age 13 through high school, they will be engaged for the rest of their lives, BHC engages 13 year-olds with Outdoor Access outings to local, state and national parks. The BHC youth internship program engages 20 interns for nine months. Under an agreement with

Fresno Unified, students from McLean, Roosevelt, Sunnyside and Edison high schools receive school credit for 20 hours during the school year and 32 hours a week on break They are paid \$20 an hour. The League’s Voter Services committee provided the interns with a class discussion on the importance of the youth vote.

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Voter Services (continued from page 5)

They are pessimistic about the future of democracy in this country and 72% think the U.S. is on the path to civil war.

Voter Services will continue to focus on voter registration, education and engagement, all of which will be very important for the upcoming March primary and November elections. There will be propositions on the ballot in both elections.

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Farm Bill Support (continued from page 3)

As individuals we can contact our elected officials and request, as the national LWVUS did, to urge congress to maintain the \$19.5 billion in the next Farm Bill. Protect our water, topsoil, food systems and our farmers with Climate-Smart Agriculture.

If you would like a list of additional sources for information please write to lenorey@csufresno.edu

County Plan “Update”

(continued from page 5)


updated in 1976 and in 2000. Since it’s now 2023, based upon past practice it is time once again to update the plan.

The County has recently posted on its website public comments on the proposed amendment. To read comments from agencies and organizations including California Rural Assistance, Inc., Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, Defenders of Wildlife and the League of Women Voters of Fresno, go to the county website at www.fresnocountyca.gov.

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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 - \$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.

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