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**Monday, September 11**  
**Board Meeting**  
**4 p.m.**  
**Stone Soup in person**

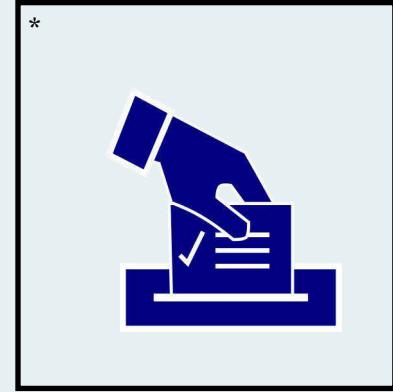
**Thursday, September 14**  
**Members Meeting**  
**5:30 p.m.**  
**Stone Soup in person**  
**Sandra Celedon**

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



# THE FRESNO VOTER

Our League's 82nd Year!



## Learn more about Building Healthy Communities

One of our treasured non-profit  
partnerships

**Thursday, September 14, 5:30 p.m.**



**Sandra Celedon**

*Sandra Celedon serves as President and CEO of Fresno Building Healthy Communities.* We have partnered with BHC on many issues representing mutual interests, including supporting multi-sector, diverse stakeholder collaborations to foster and encourage thriving communities where all children and families can live healthy, safe, and productive lives.

She'll tell us about their activities, programs, funding sources, goals and priorities.

- No reservation required: join in an interesting discussion.**
- Members and guests invited, no charge.**
- Light refreshments will be served.**



## Co-president's Message



August 2023

**S**eptember 19 is National Voter Registration Day. From ancient to modern times, philosophers, politicians, writers and just ordinary people have commented on the importance of exercising this fundamental right. Here are some of their memorable quotes:

**Plato:** One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by people who are your inferiors

**Pericles:** because you do not take an interest in politics does not mean that politics wont take an interest in you.

**Thomas Jefferson:** We do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate.

**Alexander Hamilton:** This process of election affords a moral certainty that the office of President will seldom fall to the lot of any man who is not in an eminent degree endowed with the requisite qualifications.

**Abraham Lincoln:** The ballot is stronger than the bullet.

**John F. Kennedy:** The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all.

**Barack Obama:** There's no such thing as a vote that doesn't matter.

**Susan B. Anthony:** Someone struggled for your right to vote. Use it.

**Harry Emerson Fosdick:** Democracy is based upon the conviction there are extraordinary possibilities in ordinary people.

**Peggy Noonan:** Our political leaders will know our priorities only if we tell them, again and again, and if those priorities begin to show up in the polls.

**Sharon Salzberg:** Voting is the expression of our commitment to ourselves, one another, this country, and this world.

**Nanette L. Avery:** Talk is cheap, voting is free; take it to the polls.

**Monica Crowley:** Voting is as much an emotional act as it is an intellectual one.

**Keith Ellison:** Not voting is not a protest. It is a surrender.

**Beth Broderick:** I love voting day. I love the sight of my fellow citizens lining up to make their voices heard.

**George Jean Nathan:** Bad officials are elected by good citizens who don't vote.

**Ronald Dahl:** Somewhere inside of all of us is the power to change the world.

**Father Theodore Hesburgh:** Voting is a civic sacrament.

**George Carlin:** If you don't vote, you lose the right to complain.

**Loung Ung:** Voting is not only our right—it is our power.

**Larry J. Sabato:** Every election is determined by the people who show up.

*Francine*

**Program Planning:** Arrangements for Women's Equality Day were discussed. A few people continued to meet after the board meeting to finalize the details of agenda, site needs, publicity and physical arrangements

**Student Unit:** Our new director, Naomi Bick, hopes to initiate recruitment and other steps toward re-instatement of the Unit in September.

**Mural update:** Hurray! Marianne and Kay have made preliminary arrangements with Building Healthy Communities to use a side on their newly-rented building at 2210 San Joaquin Street in downtown Fresno. We now need to develop a scope for the mural and put out a request for proposals from muralists. Funds for this project will come from the money raised for the Suffrage Centennial Project in 2020. Because of the pandemic, a large portion of the money that was raised went unused and is designated for the mural.

**Fresno County General Plan:** We are going to submit a Freedom of Information Records Act request to receive all the comments that were submitted to the county about its proposed plan since 2019.

**LWVUS:** The next national convention is scheduled for June 27 through 30, 2024, in Washington D.C. Since it will be in hybrid form, both digital and in person, the lower cost will enable us to have significant representation there.



**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. Your estate planning is encouraged to consider LWVF. Please make out checks to LWVF and send to Treasurer, LWVF,**

**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. 9 Editor: Francine M. Farber**

## Health Care

by Richard Bertken MD



### Recent healthcare items in the news:

**Dogs can smell some types of human cancer.** They can also smell human infections and other disease states. Our canine colleagues live in a perceptual world dominated by their noses. They are gifted with a highly diverse and sensitive set of receptors for volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Their brains can inventory and analyze large sets of VOCs emanating from living things or airport luggage. Certain dogs can be trained to sniff and definitively paw the yes or no of their olfactory investigations.

### Dogs could provide “smellography”

#### **Could dogs be used for medical diagnosis?**

They have already proven valuable in disease outbreaks, but their unique diagnostic contribution in day-to-day medical practice remains uncertain. If their benefit were proven, we would still have the major problem of scalability (a kennel in every hospital?). A diverse mixture of VOC's can now be identified and quantified using special spectroscopy. This technology, granted diagnostic power by dogs as trainers of intelligent computers, could add “olfactolomics” (colloquial form: “smellography”) to our diagnostic toolbox.



### Opiate addiction treatment in prison

#### **Will prisons evolve into major treatment or referral centers for opiate addiction?**

This would amount to a complete reversal in their former role of forcing agonizing opiate withdrawal and discharging inmates without medical follow-up. Since the mid-2000's, state and federal correctional agencies have watched spiraling inmate opiate deaths during and especially following incarceration. These death rates far exceeded the spiraling opiate death rates in the general population.

In California, the correctional healthcare system, under receivership since 2006, noted marked improvements in general health outcomes—diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, common cancers—but skyrocketing deaths from opiate use. In 2019, the receivership formally proposed a comprehensive plan for medical treatment of all inmates with opiate use disorder. Addicted inmates would be offered one of three agents that replace the cravings for powerful drugs like fentanyl and heroin but sustain normal social functions. At release from custody, a 60-day supply would be provided,

along with the opiate antagonist naloxone (Narcan) to prevent death from respiratory arrest caused by overdose.

### Opioid deaths show large drop



The \$380 million-dollar program was adopted in 2020 with remarkable results. Among 22,000 inmates studied, overdose deaths dropped 58 percent. (yes, street opioids leak freely into prisons). Hospitalizations for street drug intoxications dropped 50 percent. The National Institute on Drug Abuse projected savings, based on the early data from California, of \$18,000 per person over 6 months compared to detoxification alone. A California law allowing qualified drug offenders to enter treatment instead of jail saved the state close to \$100 million in its first year. California's prison system is an exception; only 11% of America's inmates receive medical treatment for opiate use disorder.

### Empathy training

#### **Scientific articles on the curriculum and value of empathy training for doctors have proliferated over the last two decades.**

On this issue, medical training has come a long way. Doctors of my vintage (MD, 1972) did not find empathy in our medical body of knowledge. There were no empathy questions on the MCAT. Our teaching leaned more to dispassionate assessment than to absorption of or attachment to patients' feelings. The recent body of empathy research has concluded that empathy, given modern curricula, can be taught. Now medical training programs around the developed world, in the midst of a global healthcare workforce deficit, are working overtime to incorporate empathy training into their already massive body of knowledge. Teaching both passive empathy (listening to and registering the speech and behaviors of real or actor patients) and active empathy (responding in helpful ways dictated by emotional intelligence) will be challenging, both in cost and time. But it will be much more useful than some overelaborated components of traditional medical education.



I am especially interested in fostering “collective empathy”—sensitivity to the feelings of defined groups of patients. In my imagined empathy course, future doctors would learn about preventing, by intelligent scheduling and patient flow monitoring, the profound negative mood and health effects of prolonged waits for appointments and for overlong waits in offices.

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## Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



### The \$414 million budget of the Department of Behavioral Health comes from four major sources:

\* Public Safety Realignment 2011 shifted funding and responsibility for behavioral health services from the State to the County. 2011 realignment directed 1.0625% of Sales Tax to these services. This is flexible money and can be used to fund specialty mental health, managed care, drug courts, perinatal drug services, and other Medi-Cal services.

\* 1991 Realignment funds are used to serve adults and children with serious mental illness or serious emotional disturbance. 1991 realignment also funds community-based mental health services, state hospital services, and long-term nursing facilities, such as Institutions for Mental Disease and Mental Health Recovery Centers. Revenue sources used to fund 1991 Realignment are one-half cent of State Sales Tax and State Vehicle License Fees. This funding amount is predictable at \$33.3 million annually.

\* Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) revenues come from 1% tax on incomes in excess of \$1 million to expand mental health services. The County is required to prepare and receive approval of its plans for MHSA programs. It is difficult to estimate the annual allocations from income tax receipts.

\* In the past, Medi-Cal Specialty Mental Health Reimbursement has provided the County with a percentage of their expenditures. However, the new CalAIM Behavioral Health Payment Reform initiative is moving towards a fee-for-service reimbursement eliminating need for the reconciliation to actual cost. It is a complicated and somewhat unpredictable financial structure for serving our most vulnerable Fresno County residents.

Last month the Behavioral Health Board visited the Crisis Residential Center, which is a 24/7, voluntary program housing sixteen individuals recovering from mental health crises. It is listed as a social rehabilitation facility and is not locked. Fresno County residents ages 18-59 may be referred by emergency departments, crisis stabilization units, or acute psychiatric hospitals. Those served have

severe mental illnesses, do not need hospitalization, but are not ready to live independently in the community. Within the first 72 hours, there is a psychiatric and medication evaluation, a mental health screening and assessment, and a nursing screening and assessment. Resource Specialists meet regularly with the residents to connect them to community resources. Residents are required to attend six out of ten groups a day. Individuals may stay for up to 30 days to meet their recovery goals.

The BHB is conducting its annual self-evaluation. The Board is requesting input from service providers, community members, and its own members. We would appreciate your participation! The web site: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/BHB-EVAL](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BHB-EVAL)

[evansalca@comcast.net](mailto:evansalca@comcast.net)

## Voter Services

by Sue Goldman



The Voter Services Committee met in August and discussed high school registration and activities around National Voter Registration Day on September 19<sup>th</sup>. The goal is to focus on youth and minority potential voters.



Letters were sent to seven school districts within Fresno county quoting from the law which requires each high school to assign an individual to facilitate voter registration.

We offered our services to assist with or conduct voter registration at the high schools. We will also be contacting Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher, the county superintendent, in regard to this issue.

The League board is going to advertise National Voter Registration Day on social media. We will be putting up ads on Meta companies: Facebook; Instagram and Threads (Meta's equivalent to what used to be called Twitter and is now X).

We will also contact local media such as radio and TV stations to publicize National Voter Registration Day. We are planning to partner with other organizations on these issues. In addition, we are going to place voter information at local museums and other public non-profit sites.

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# Education

by Kay Bertken



**Next Board Meetings**

**Wednesday, September 13**

**Wednesday, September 27**

According to first reports, the new school year has begun relatively smoothly.

Aside from some inadequate air conditioning on a particularly warm first day, the district has evidently not seen some of the chaos that enveloped other U.S. cities.



mer 8,000 students took advantage of the summer enrichment camps that were offered in July.

## More after school programs

For the start of this school year, the district has announced there will be no wait lists for after school programs. The existence of those wait lists has frustrated

many working parents who need placement for their children through their own work hours.

## Bus driver shortage in many districts

in Louisville, Kentucky a shortage of bus drivers led to chaos on the first day of school as students spent hours getting to and from school. A similar bus driver shortage has plagued many school districts in the country this year. Fresno Unified recently moved most of the drivers who had been on part-time contracts into fulltime positions. It is hoped that helped this year. A board meeting following the opening of school should reveal any problems that may have arisen.

The biggest issue clouding the beginning of school is the unresolved contract negotiations with the Fresno Teachers' Association (FTA). The negotiations, which began last spring, have not yielded an agreement thus far; and the FTA has held out the possibility of a strike. Superintendent Nelson announced at the first Board meeting, held just before the first day of school, that schools would remain open and staffed even if teachers were to be a strike.

Fresno Unified has been commended as a model for the use of new extended education funding. Over this sum-

## Early reading literacy

This new school year will include development of the strategies for achieving reading literacy for FUSD students by first grade, the district's "Campaign for Literacy."

## Safe routes to schools

A report on safe routes to schools will also be completed. It should direct the district and the city to remedy identified problems. Fresno has been reported among the top ten deadliest cities in the United States for pedestrians. A Fresno Unified student was killed last school year crossing a street, and parents have frequently complained about safety issues in the drop off/pick up areas of their schools. Road design needs to prioritize the well being of all of us who may be walking or riding bicycles, especially children getting to and from our schools.

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## Housing

by Marianne Kast



A recent trip to Colorado had me wondering about the relationship between vacation housing and affordable housing. Driving on Interstate 70, the main transcontinental highway bisecting the state, you enter Colorado near Grand Junction, and 600 spectacular miles later, pass through Denver. Along the way you could stop at many well-known mountain towns, filled with vacationers headed to every kind of outdoor activity, and parking lots and secondary roads clogged with vehicles.

The high Rocky Mountain vistas are breath-taking, but one prominent feature of most mountain towns is numerous multi-story housing complexes, some comprising hundreds of units. These huge housing developments are visible from the highway; they poke up in the valleys, line mountain ridges, and nestle, poorly camouflaged, in the forested foothills. In many areas, more complexes are under construction.

Meanwhile, Colorado has one of the nation's most serious housing shortages. For example, in Summit County, Colorado, just west of Denver, which includes the towns of Keystone, Breckenridge, Dillon, and Silverthorn, there are more housing units than there are residents. One local planning consultant surmised that if every man woman and child in the county were placed in their own home, there would still be vacant units. Yet, workers in these towns are often forced to live in converted motel rooms, shared accommodations, and other sub-standard housing.

The problem is short-term vacation rentals. The enormous complexes in these towns are vacation rentals. Second-homeowners offset the cost of vacation homes and make some money by investing in short-term rentals. These units, booked through platforms such as AirBnB and VRBO, have squeezed the towns' housing supplies. As a result, the rents on the shrinking supply of full-time rental units have skyrocketed, making it difficult for workers to live in those communities.

Larger cities have moved to restrict this type of rental, but smaller cities have to balance the lodging industry that fuels their economy with the need to support workers. New York, Boston and even Denver, have restricted rentals of less than 30 days and

## Climate Change

by Nancy Richardson



Valley air pollution is consistently the worst in the nation. A leading local climate activist, Dr. Alex Sheriffs, suggests that LWVF presence is welcome and impactful at many meetings, such as the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and that District's Community Advisory Committee.

Also, he urges the League itself, as well as its individual members, to participate in Climate Health Now. Its purpose is to engage health professionals and others to work for supportive legislation and bring programs and money to the Central Valley. Its current topics of focus for the Central Valley are electrifying school buses and monitoring clean truck programs by the California Air Resources Board.

Strong support is needed to direct millions of dollars for these purposes to the Valley. Go to the Climate Health Now website to join and get on their newsletter list at no charge. You might want to attend California Air Resources Board's monthly Community Evening Meetings with staff to discuss community needs for clean transportation. They are the third Thursday of the month from 5-7 p.m. A draft plan was released in August for finalization this month. See CARB's LCTI Meetings and Events webpage.

New articles from The Washington Post, Bloomberg, and others cite pollution coming from brakes and tires as being vastly more problematic, as new vehicles are weighing far more than in the recent past. Brake and tire emissions are not regulated. According to a Bloomberg article, the average weight of a new vehicle sold in the US last year was 1,000 pounds, higher than the average in 1980 and up about 175 pounds in the last three years.

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rentals that are not the homeowner's primary residence, in order to keep available housing for full-time residents. But one Oregon county that approved a ballot measure banning new short-term rentals and phasing out others in certain areas, was put on hold by a suit brought by vacation rental owners, and is awaiting resolution in court.

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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**

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