

Phone: 559-226—VOTE

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Web site:
www.lwvfresno.org

THE

FRESNO VOTER

Our 86th Year



MEET COUNCIL MEMBER

BRANDON VANG

SEPTEMBER 18

5:30 P.M.

STONE SOUP



Monday, September 8
Regular Board Meeting
4 p.m.
Stone Soup in person

Thursday, September 18
Member Meeting
Brandon Vang

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

PATRIOT DAY
SEPTEMBER 11

WE
WILL
NEVER
FORGET

Brandon Vang was sworn into office on April 10, 2025, becoming the first person of Hmong descent to represent District 5. His campaign was notable for its grassroots approach and engaging with underrepresented communities.

Brandon was born in Laos during the Vietnam War. His family fled the country and settled in southern California in 1979. They later moved to Fresno, where he graduated from McLane High School and later, UCLA. He worked as a probation officer before becoming a Trustee for the Sanger Unified School District. He was re-elected in 2020 and 2024, both times unopposed.

His priorities for District 5 are public safety, infrastructure improvements, economic development, and support for small businesses. He is committed to serving the diverse communities of District 5.

REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED.

NO RESERVATIONS REQUIRED.

FEEL FREE TO BRING GUESTS.

Co-President's Message

by Kay Bertken



August 2025

If you have never telephoned your Congressional representatives, or if it has been a while since you have done that, there are some important opportunities to do it now. It seems to be the case that calls get through to them better than emails or even letters.

The state and national leagues have sent out Action Alerts asking league members around the country to phone their representatives in response to the Big Beautiful Bill. The other is to register support for the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

First introduce yourself, indicate you are a resident of a particular city and state, and indicate your desire to leave a message for your representative. Be prepared to give your zip code. Most members of Congress will not talk to you unless you live in their district. Unfortunate.

With respect to the Big Beautiful Bill: If your Congress member voted for it, use the following script or a similar message with your own words. Be brief and respectful.

"As your constituent, I want to register my disappointment that you supported the Big Beautiful Bill and cut vital programs that your constituents depend on to offset the cost of tax cuts for wealthy Americans."

If they voted against it: *"I want to thank you for voting against the Big Beautiful Bill, standing up for your constituents, and opposing cuts to vital programs. Anything that you might do to undo the damage caused by that bill is essential."*

For the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

"I am calling to ask you to support the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. Every day the freedom to vote is being attacked. Thirty-one states have enacted laws that make it harder to vote, with the burden falling hardest on Black voters and other voters of color. This is vital legislation to fully restore and modernize the Voting Rights Act and ensure that discriminatory policies are stopped in their tracks."

A representative democracy requires more than our votes for candidates. It requires us to make sure those candidates, once elected, still hear from us.

Kay

The Voter is a monthly publication of the LWV Fresno

Mailing address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710

Volume 66 No. 9 Editor: Francine M. Farber

Retreat: The Board gathered for a retreat at Kay's house and spent several hours discussing important issues.

New Members: An orientation is planned for August 15 in the small meeting room at Stone Soup.

Women's Equality Day Plans were finalized for speakers and logistics at Stone Soup in the new Mekong Room.

Water: A representative is sought to represent us on the LWVC Water Committee.

Student Unit: We need to have closer relations and become more involved together in activities. We will contact them to discuss how we can do this.

Web site: We will continue to use the state MyLo web site for \$275 annually rather than change to Chaper Spot.

PMP: We decided to pay our PMP (per member payment) in one sum which is \$4,000 to state and \$4,000 to national.

DONATIONS

This month generous donations were received from

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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, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno 93710.



It is impossible to speak about plastic as one thing. A variety of chemicals are added to the manufacturing process to meet the desired specifications of the product.

There are at least 16,000 known chemical additives used by the plastic industry, a quarter of which are known to be toxic. These toxins break down with the plastic and remain in the environment. Plastic remains plastic forever, degrading into micro and nano plastic particles over time.

.Micro plastics measure five millimeters wide, with nano particles measuring less than one micrometer, unseeable by the human eye and small enough to enter human cells. For comparison, one strand of human hair is eighty thousand nano meters wide.

Trying to understand the implications of nano plastics to our health and the environment is a complicated task. There is research going on around the world among scientists and physicians who believe the health risks of plastic nano particles in the human body are real. Nano plastics can enter the body through food, water and the air, and even some chewing gum. There is observable evidence that plastic can be found in the organs of the human body; whether it's bad for one's health is a subject that the FDA continues to research.

The plastic industry has recognized that micro and nano particles do exist, but the industry points out that the FDA has not yet proved that degraded plastic particles are harmful to human health. The FDA research is limited to the plastic we consume through food and its plastic packaging.

The biggest culprit for plastic pollution is the one-use plastic water bottle. This is an area where making an individual effort to avoid drinking water from plastic bottles can make a big impact. Not only is the one-use plastic a nightmare for the environment, but it could also be a risk to our bodies. There are some single use bottled waters that advertise that they contain no or fewer plastic particles. This might be something to research if bottled water is your only option.

Avoiding the use of plastics is a challenge. As in all things, awareness regarding the personal use of plastics is a start. A preference for non-plastic containers in the grocery and drug stores may begin a movement to lessen the amount of plastic that enters the ecosystem every day. sandyaune@outlook.com

LWVC responds to vow to kill mail ballots

The League of Women Voters CEO, Celina Stewart, Esq., issued the following statement in response to President Trump's vow to eliminate mail-in ballots and voting machines:

"Free, fair, and accessible elections are the cornerstone of a healthy democracy. President Trump's call to eliminate vote-by-mail is a direct attack on Americans' freedom to vote.

"Vote-by-mail is secure, accurate, and trusted by millions of voters — including older adults, military members, rural communities, tribal communities, voters of color, and voters with disabilities. Vote-by-mail has proven to expand voter participation in recent elections.

"President Trump has no constitutional authority to take this action. Under our US Constitution, the states have the power to run elections, and only Congress can step in to regulate those elections when needed. This move is yet another overreach by an unpopular president who seeks to silence the public to hold onto power.

"President Trump's attacks on voting machines are similarly misleading and dangerous. Voting systems in the US already meet strict standards for security, accuracy, transparency, and accessibility, with paper ballots or audit trails to verify results. Scrapping machines in favor of hand counting would undermine election integrity and efficiency, not strengthen it. The League of Women Voters stands firmly for secure, modern systems that protect every vote and uphold public trust in our democracy.

"The President should get his facts straight: he does not have the authority to regulate elections, states have strong measures to ensure voting equipment is secure, and many countries successfully utilize vote-by-mail.

"The League of Women Voters will not stand by while politicians spread lies to limit democratic participation. We will be looking at the forthcoming Executive Order very closely and will use every tool in our toolbox to push back on these threats to our free, fair, and accessible elections.

"We will fight to protect vote-by-mail and every method that makes casting a ballot accessible. Our democracy is strong when every eligible voter can make their voice heard, whether at a polling place or through a mail-in ballot."

Education

by Kay Bertken



A new school year has begun, and some new things are happening in Fresno Unified.

After many school board meetings last year were taken up with the concerns of special education bus drivers, the district contracted with a new special education transport company called Zum which has begun service. The transportation of special ed students is especially complex, often involving door to door transport of medically fragile and/or physically disabled children. Zum is offering parents a phone app that allows them to track their children's ride in real time from pick up to school delivery, a service likely to be comforting to parents.

The City of Fresno is re-invigorating its School Liaison Subcommittee. Fresno Unified has appointed Keshia Thomas to join Veva Islas and Elizabeth Jonasson Rosas in that group that contains representatives from Clovis, Central, and Sanger school districts and Council members Esparza, Vang and Richardson. That group is charged with enhancing cooperation between the districts and the city in improving infrastructure, student supports, and safety around the schools.

They will be especially focused on safe routes to school. Most kids no longer walk or ride their bikes to school for good reason.. Our community scores low on bicycle and pedestrian safety and there have been a number of accidents. There are innumerable traffic snarls at schools around drop off and pick up times. Fixing that will require the hard work of this committee plus resources to make our roads safer.

Most of a recent school board meeting involved dialogue with the Council of Great City Schools coach, who was preparing them to evaluate their goal attainment at the next meeting. The trustees began an elaborate process of goal-setting last semester that focused their attention on student achievement. At this last meeting they made sure that they had defined clear achievement targets as well as the criteria available to assess whether those targets had been met. When staff presents the data from the end of last year, the trustees should be ready partners in constructive analysis of that data.

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Behavioral Health

by Sherri Gibson



Among the many executive orders issued by President Trump is one entitled "Ending Crime and Disorder on America's Streets." It asserts that U.S. homelessness hit a record 274,224 people and that many have mental health or addiction problems. It suggests that prior programs failed because they did not address root causes.

The Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services are directed to reverse judicial precedents and terminate consent decrees that limit government's ability to civilly commit individuals who endanger themselves or others. Prioritized grants will support flexible civil commitment, institutional treatment and step-down models. Harm reduction will not be approved. They will also prioritize grants that enforce bans on open drug use, urban camping, loitering and squatting. Direct federal law enforcement assistance toward encampment removal can occur when local resources fall short.

The major thrust of this executive order involves ending "housing first" policies and requiring substance use/mental health treatment as a condition for program participation. The movement toward forced institutionalization and away from "housing first" models presents many problems for the State and County. There are not enough beds or treatment options currently available. Shifting care to more restrictive institutional settings and increased civil commitment facilities will strain county budget. This executive order will require legal analysis of conflicts with current laws such as confidentiality and others.

One relatively new program provided by Fresno County Behavioral Health is the Mobile Crisis Response service. There is also a Crisis Intervention Team which includes law enforcement and a clinician who respond to calls that require law enforcement response but may have a mental health component. This team is available from 6 a.m. until midnight. The Mobile Crisis team was initiated in January 2024 and consists of a clinician and

(continued on page 8)

Housing

by Marianne Kast



The City of Fresno is in the midst of applying for the Prohousing Designation Program through the CA Dept. of Housing and Community Development (HCDC). The City previously earned this designation in 2023, but was stripped of it last May when several of the proposed programs failed to materialize after two years.

The new application includes only programs that are currently in existence, and Phil Skei, Fresno's Assistant Director of Planning and Development, is confident the City will earn the Prohousing Designation again this fall. The designation gives the City prioritized access to numerous state grants for affordable housing. The City's actual application, a recorded informational webinar, and other details about this process can be accessed at <https://www.fresno.gov/planning/plans-projects-under-review/#prohousing-designation>.

Since 1969, California has required that local governments plan to meet the housing needs of everyone in the community. The process starts with the HCDC determining how much housing at a variety of affordability levels is needed for each region in the state. Then regional governments allocate that housing need to local governments who develop "housing elements" as part of their general plans to show how they will meet local housing needs. Last year the City of Fresno's Housing Element indicated that between 2023-3031, Fresno would need to develop the following housing units (includes unmet units from the previous 8-year cycle)

Very-low income <50% of area median income:	9440 units
Low income 50-80% of area median income:	5884
Moderate income 80-120% of area median income:	5638
Above moderate >120% of area median income:	13020
Total units:	33342

At a recent mid-year update on Fresno's housing element, the City Planning Department reported the following actual units permitted/built as of mid-summer, 2025:

Very low income:	333 units
Low income:	150
Moderate income:	157
Above moderate income:	2887

Total units: 3524

Yes, there's progress toward improving the housing crisis in Fresno, but ever so slowly.

County General Plan misses the mark

by Radley Reep

Last year the County of Fresno comprehensively updated its General Plan land use policies to serve through 2042. Knowing the associated environmental review was seriously flawed, the League, together with the Central Valley Partnership and the Sierra Club (Tehipite Chapter), filed suit, asking the Superior Court to set aside the update and decertify the EIR. A decision on that court case is expected sometime in 2026.

While it would have been prudent for the County to wait for a court decision before approving more changes to the General Plan, that's not what happened. Last month the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to further amend the General Plan by updating three components of the Plan: the Housing Element and the community plans for Biola and Del Rey.

Members of the public testified in opposition. The Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability asked the supervisors not to update the Housing Element until there was an opportunity for greater community input and the inclusion of additional policies to aid and protect disadvantaged unincorporated communities.

With respect to the two community plan updates, the League asked the Board of Supervisors to prepare a complete environmental assessment of each plan, as both updates had environmental impacts not previously disclosed.

The League pointed out that the environment assessment of the Del Rey Community Plan Update failed to identify a TCP contamination problem in the community's water system. Regarding Biola, the League informed the supervisors that the environmental assessment failed to analyze potential impacts identified by several agencies, including Caltrans and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. In addition, neither assessment attempted to mitigate the loss of agricultural land or analyze the planned enlargement of the community's wastewater treatment facility.

Nonetheless, the Board of Supervisors approved all three updates as presented by staff, by employing an extraordinary environmental procedure. Reasoning that the EIR prepared in 2024 for the update of the General Plan was complete in its assessment of these three future projects, the County prepared "addendums" to its 2024 EIR.

(continued on page 8)

Voter Services

by Sue Goldman



The main issue for voting is the November Special Election regarding redistricting. A summary of Proposition 50 is listed below.

The California Constitution establishes the Citizens Redistricting Commission, which is required to adjust the boundary lines of congressional, Senate, Assembly, and State Board of Equalization districts in the year following the year in which the national census is taken at the beginning of each decade.

This measure, which would include a legislative finding that it is in response to redistricting in Texas in 2025, would, notwithstanding the authority of the Citizens Redistricting Commission, require the state to temporarily use the congressional districts reflected in AB 604 of the 2025–26 Regular Session for every congressional election until the new congressional boundary lines are drawn by the commission in 2031.

Dates

- ♦ State Voter Information Guide from Secretary of State is September 19
- ♦ Your county elections office will begin mailing ballots by October 6
- ♦ Ballot drop-off locations open October 7.
- ♦ The last day to register to vote for the November 4 Statewide Special Election is October 20
- ♦ Vote centers open for early in-person voting in all Voter's Choice Act counties beginning on October 25
- ♦ Vote-by-mail ballots must be postmarked on or before Election Day and received by November 1,

The Voter Services Committee is engaged in both short term and long-term planning. For the upcoming election the following are planned:

- ♦ Collaborating with Radio Bilingue in terms of providing them with voter information and PSA's pulled from various sites.
- ♦ Contacting other organizations with the hopes of collaborating with them.

- ♦ Develop a Pros and Cons presentation on Prop. 50 with information on mis and dis-information.
- ♦ Coordinate with the Student Unit
- ♦ Posting photos on our social media sites
- ♦ Tabling at activities such as Fresno Unified's Parent University events.

Longer term activities include:

- ♦ Working the lines again at the various Food Bank sites
- ♦ Possible podcasts on radio shows
- ♦ Tabling at Fresno State's Volunteer Fair

We are always looking for more volunteers for activities beyond the phone bank and ballot opening. If you are interested in being part of the Voter Services Committee

or

Update on Southeast Development

Last year the city's Planning and Development Department outlined plans to develop 9000 acres of mostly prime farmland into residential areas accommodating 145,000 additional residents in the City of Fresno. This expansion known as the Southeast Development Area (SEDA), would come at the continued cost of already blighted areas currently within the city limits, and would put off for additional decades the incomplete infrastructure and poorly maintained streets, sidewalks, storm drains, and other needs of our existing City.

Over 200 residents packed the Council chambers last spring in opposition to the plan. Realizing the depth of community disapproval, the Fresno Planning Department removed the item from the Council agenda, hoping to garner support for this plan (or some modified version of it) before bringing it back to the City Council for approval. There has been no public comment as to when this might happen.

Meanwhile, interested groups of residents from all parts of Fresno have gathered to oppose the SEDA expansion, quantifying the lacking infrastructure needs of their own neighborhoods, lobbying their councilpersons, and activating neighbors, fearful that expansion into a new part of the City will doom their neighborhoods to permanent disrepair and eventual blight.

To keep up to date on SEDA: www.greenfieldcoalition.org/take-action

If Only He'd Attended Pre-School...

by Francine M. Farber

(This column was published in the Fresno Bee in 2018. I thought it still rang true today.)

Would President Trump be different if he had attended preschool? Sounds ridiculous at first glance, right? But let's take a look at what might have been.

According to a presidential education website, young Donald J. Trump attended kindergarten through grade 7 in a private school in Queens, New York, which catered to families who could afford the high tuition. Although the school also had pre-kindergarten classes, there is no indication that the future president attended them.

Instead, in elementary and middle school he began to exhibit behavioral difficulties that caused his parents to enroll him in the New York Military Academy. Reportedly he made frequent trips into New York City without his parents' knowledge or permission.

General benefits of pre-school

Educational experts are in agreement that high quality preschool prepares children for success in kindergarten and beyond including the reduction of retention in grade and reduction of referrals for special education; increases the graduation rate and reduces drop-outs; and reduces later dependence on government support, among other benefits.

We know that Donald J. Trump had socio-economic and family advantages that doubtless helped set him on the path to success even without preschool. However, without regard to his politics, would early and personal attention in a high quality preschool setting have made a difference in the president's skills and behavior today? What might

he have learned in preschool anyway?

What about language arts?

Well, let's start with language arts, otherwise known as speaking, reading and writing. Children are encouraged to learn new words and use longer, detailed sentences. The president is known for making up some words (such as *biggly*) but his general vocabulary is not complex and his sentence structure is sometimes inarticulate. Children love to listen to and talk about stories. This encourages them to learn to read when they are ready. The president is known not to be a reader.

Although preschoolers' first attempts at writing things down often appear as scribbles, children become excited at the idea that they are creating messages. Their stories are encouraged to become longer as they grow older and not be confined to 140 characters as in Twitter (now known as X).



Number skills are important

Now let's talk about mathematics. Preschoolers do a lot of counting and estimating to learn about number concepts. That should help when figuring out how many people attended your inauguration or who has the biggest nuclear bomb, or even comparing hand size.

Preschoolers also learn to solve problems and make decisions. They learn how to handle frustration when something is difficult so the world around them is a more comfortable place. That is certainly an important skill for a world leader.

Let's not forget science

Preschoolers love to play scientist. They learn about the world by observing and experimenting. They also notice the many ways that they can influence the natural world. Preschoolers may watch what happens to an ice cube in a warm room. That should be invaluable information when climate change issues are under discussion.

Preschool social studies helps children develop an understanding of their place in the world and how to get along with others. They learn about the languages and cultures of other children in their classroom and take field trips around the neighborhood to gain an appreciation of others' lives and living conditions. Ultimately the goal is respect and appreciation, invaluable characteristics for a future leader.

Perhaps the most important things children can learn in preschool have to do with their social and emotional development. Most of us can tick off these traits rather easily: taking turns, showing concern for a friend in distress, cooperating with others, wanting to please friends, and by age 5 distinguishing what is real and what is make believe.

Reviewing the preschool curriculum and assuming that a bright student like the young Donald J. Trump would have mastered it, if our president had gone to preschool, today we would have a leader who is an articulate speaker, a proficient and enthusiastic reader and writer, a proficient estimator, an accurate observer of scientific facts, a concerned citizen of the world who displays understanding, respect and empathy for people with disabilities, all genders, ethnicities and religions, and an individual who can differentiate between real and fake news.

Parents, send your children to preschool and they will become great presidents.

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Health Care

by Richard Bertken, M.D.



Starting in August of 2013 and continuing for the next year, my monthly healthcare articles focused on innumerable problems with implementing the Affordable Care Act in Fresno County.

All this happened in a happy place. A broad range of state and local healthcare providers and officials enthusiastically engaged in these discussions. We felt privileged to play a role in extending Central California's safety net for medical services.

The recent Congress-redefined MediCal and Covered California enrollment will not foster an enthusiastic, or perhaps even adequate workforce. The One Big Beautiful Bill (its official name in the Congressional record) set up work requirements for MediCal recipients, recurring eligibility checks for more complex eligibility criteria, and re-

duced benefits and subsidies for Covered California health plans.

These malicious modifications of the Affordable Care Act will threaten the financing of hospitals, especially the US portfolio of small rural hospitals which are already facing collective bankruptcy. Because the states must bear the cost of the expanded administration these changes require, they will be forced to increase taxes or decrease other services.

Georgia adopted a work requirement for Medicaid recipients in July of 2023 that has required \$50 million yearly to maintain. Scaling up to California, the costs here would be \$200 million annually. Generally overlooked is the reality that Federal cuts in healthcare spending will require nearly equivalent administrative spending by the states, most of which, including California, are struggling to balance their budgets.

Unlike the Federal Government, they are not allowed deficit spending.

In a final, overtly cynical move, our Congress delayed the onset of their deep and complex cuts to the ACA until after the 2026 midterm elections, illustrating their awareness of likely negative public responses to their actions against much-needed safety net services.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates ten-year savings from the OBBA of \$300 billion from the ACA Marketplace health plan subsidies and \$800 billion from the Medicaid program. The CBO also finds that these savings will be entirely attributable to reductions in healthcare services.

The total federal government healthcare savings of \$1.1 trillion (300 + 800 billion) is dwarfed by the cost of sustaining tax cuts passed in the first Trump administration: \$3.4 trillion. So much for balancing our federal budget.

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Behavioral Health

(continued from page x)

case manager. This team provides a rapid response to crisis when triaging determines safety and no need for law enforcement. There is also a team which can respond to crises at schools. The team provides individual assessment, stabilization, and follow up with case manager. This avoids unnecessary emergency department care, psychiatric inpatient hospitalizations and law enforcement involvement.

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County General Plans

(continued from page x)

That procedure was improper. Addendums are only appropriate where there is need for minor modification of an existing EIR and, at the same time, there are no new impacts or environmental issues that were not within the scope of the antecedent EIR. Without doubt, the TCP contamination problem in Del Rey was new information, as there was no mention of it in the 2024 EIR. Similarly, the expansion of each community's wastewater treatment facility and the impacts subsequently identified by agencies were not within the scope the 2024 EIR.

Instead, the County should have assessed all of the impacts identified by the public and then prepared requisite environmental documents, which could have been, as appropriate, supplemental EIRs or mitigated negative declarations,

The League hopes the County will discontinue its new and novel practice of preparing addendums to its 2024 EIR as a way to shortcut the environmental review of new land use projects.

radleyreep@netzero.net



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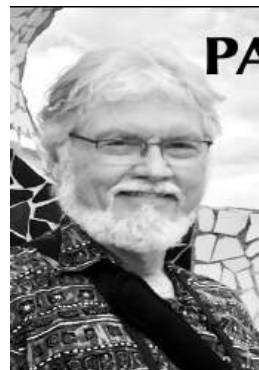
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DIVERSITY POLICY: There shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the LWVF on the basis of race, creed national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or socio-economic level.

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/>

Please make your check payable to the US League of Women Voters, Fresno, and send to our local office at LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710. with registration form below

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