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The *Fresno* **VOTER**



Tuesday, September 4 *
Regular Board Meeting
League Office, 5 p.m.**

**October (date TBA)
Lunch & Learn
Transportation Institute
Fresno State**

**Saturday, October 27
We host Regional Meeting
Transformation Journey
Speakers from LWVC**

**November (date TBA)
Lunch & Learn
Office of Independent Review**

**** * REGULAR BOARD
MEETINGS WILL NOW BE
HELD ON THE FIRST
TUESDAY OF THE MONTH,
5 p.m., LEAGUE OFFICE.
MEMBERS AND GUESTS
WELCOME**



**STATE LEAGUE RECOMMENDS BALLOT
MEASURES FOR NOVEMBER ELECTIONS**

This election, voters face long ballots and are being asked to weigh in on a wide variety of critical issues. Whether you vote early, by mail, or on Election Day, we've made the decisions easier. After careful study and analysis, the League of Women Voters of California has recommendations on 7 statewide ballot measures:

YES on Prop 1: *Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond* - California is experiencing a housing crisis. The state's extreme shortage of affordable housing has life and death consequences, especially for people with low incomes. Housing instability has been linked to public health crises, food insecurity, and developmental problems in children. Prop 1 will build and preserve affordable homes, including supportive housing, for veterans, working families, people with disabilities, Californians experiencing homelessness and others struggling to find a safe place to call home. It will authorize \$4 billion in general obligation bonds, to be used to support these affordable housing programs. It would also leverage federal dollars for construction of new housing.

YES on Prop 2: *Homeless Housing Bond* - A quarter of the nation's homeless reside in California--over 130,000 people. A significant percentage of our homeless population suffers from mental illness. Prop 2 allows the use of unspent money, originally allocated through a 2004 measure to fund mental health services, to be used to address the problem. If passed, the unspent money would be used to provide permanent supportive housing for people who need mental health services, and are either currently homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

NO on Prop 3: *Water Bond* -It is essential that California manage and develop water resources in ways that benefit the environment, and that the environmental focus emphasizes both conservation and use-appropriate high water quality standards. However, this bond is not the way to accomplish those goals. While the League of Women Voters of California supports the use of long-term debt (bond measures) to finance capital projects, this measure has a number of fatal flaws, including:

(continued on page 3)

President's Message



The League of Women Voters of California has released its recommendations for voting on the statewide measures that will appear on the November, 2018 ballot. You can read them here beginning on page 1. I believe I heard the whole state sigh in relief once those were published. It's as if the public debate doesn't officially begin until the League weighs in with its opinions.

Why are the League's recommendations so weighty? It is because League recommendations are backed by positions formed from study, consensus, then action. The League's views are consistent across all partisan lines and support the principles of good government.

This summer the League in Fresno gathered a network of mostly local organizations who are concerned with the lack of transparency and clear direction for the update of the Fresno County General Plan. While each of the participating organizations has a distinct agenda, all agree that the County inadequately sought public input to the Plan update that will direct land use decisions in Fresno County for the next 20 years. Further, the current Plan has suffered from lack of implementation, inadequate funding, and a general disconnect between the goals, policies, and programs of the Plan, so simply updating it seems futile.

This network, organized by League member Radley Reep, is a great use of League resources. Rad's knowledge of the Fresno County General Plan is encyclopedic, and when combined with the experience of some of our area's most accomplished advocates, the network is a formidable voice for rethinking the Plan update process. The group has addressed the supervisors individually and the Board publicly, asking that hearings be reopened and all stakeholders have the opportunity for input.

Just as the LWVC ballot recommendations are important, so is the Fresno League's monitoring of the County General Plan. Our actions reflect positions developed over twenty years of study. The League's work on the General Plan has been consistent over time, non-partisan, and based on the principles of good government. That's the League way!

- *Marianne*

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MEMBER NEWS

Please edit your roster



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The League is a 501 c (3) non-profit organization so your dues payments are tax deductible and gratefully accepted.



PROPOSITIONS

(continued from page 1)

- Shifting the cost for water from the end users to California taxpayers;
- Reducing state money available for other critical state programs like education, affordable housing, and healthcare;
- Failing to provide for adequate project oversight and financial accountability.

NO on Prop 4: Children's Hospital

Bond - While the League supports quality healthcare for all Californians, Prop 4 would use \$1.5 billion in public, general obligation bond money to support privately-owned children's hospitals, along with five children's hospitals in the University of California system.

State funds should not be used to support private facilities. This principle stands even when, as is the case in this measure, the facilities serve severely ill children. These are capital improvements that could be funded either through revenues the private hospitals generate or through capital campaigns.

NO on Prop 5: Property Tax - Property taxes are the major source of funding for schools and local services. Prop 5 is a costly constitutional amendment that would reduce funds for schools and local services by \$1 billion per year. In exchange for that \$1 billion a year, Prop 5 would provide special tax benefits to some property owners. It does nothing to help low-income seniors, or families struggling to find housing.

NO on Prop 6: Repeal Gas Tax -

California is in critical need of highway and local street repairs and maintenance, and improvements to mass transit and transportation. Prop 6 would repeal the recently-enacted 2017 package of taxes and fees approved by the State Legislature to fund transportation projects, amounting to a loss of \$4.7 billion in annual funding.

Passage of this repeal measure would have significant negative impacts and leave our state structures vulnerable, especially during natural disasters.

YES on Prop 10: Repeal Costa Hawkins -

While this rent control measure offers little systemic progress, and may not result in adding new affordable housing units, it does allow local communities to respond to the housing crisis in ways that are appropriate for each of them. We support providing local communities with this control.

PLEASE NOTE: Because League positions do not cover the issues in the following measures, the LWVC is taking no stand on Prop 7 (Daylight Savings Time), Prop 8 (Dialysis), Prop 11 (Ambulance Drivers), and Prop 12 (Farm Animals). Prop 9 was removed from the ballot.

How does the League make ballot measure endorsements?

We only take positions on ballot measures based on current advocacy positions and League principles. Positions are developed through grass roots member study and consensus.



Water News

by Diane Merrill



As reported a year ago in the Voter, LWVC signed on to a letter of support for SB 623, the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Act. Since then, SB 844 and SB 845 have emerged as the package of legislation with the best chance of addressing the safe and affordable drinking water crisis that impacts approximately 1 million Californians in nearly every county in California.

Together, these bills would provide funding to address contamination from arsenic, nitrates, uranium, and other substances.

SB 844 would raise taxes on dairies and fertilizer manufacturers and requires a 2/3 support for passage. SB 845 would require community water systems by July 1, 2019, to add a "voluntary remittance to provide safe drinking water to disadvantaged communities." Customers would have to opt-out to avoid paying the fee. SB 845 requires a majority vote for passage. Enactment of either bill requires that both bills be passed by the Senate and Assembly during the 2017-2018 legislative session.

According to a Sacramento Bee Capitol Alert, the bills have the support of Governor Brown and, "Supporters expect the bills to generate as much as \$100 million per year and cost most homeowners no more than 95 cents per month, money that would be prioritized to the areas with greatest risk."

Education

by Kay Bertken



School is in session again and the Board of Trustees has begun meeting after its summer hiatus

Preliminary data from last year's state testing showed some improvement in both English Language Arts (ELA) and Math. Overall the District's proportion of students who met or exceeded standards in ELA went from 33.6% to 36.8% and in math from 24.1% to 26.8%. The scores are still quite low when compared to the overall scores in the county where the proportions were 46.4% in ELA and 34.3% in math, although they showed less improvement than FUSD.

Last year's graduation rate was reported by the state at 82%, a decline from 85.5% in 2017. Staff suggested that the decline was due to new methods of calculation that will necessitate using the 2017 figure as the baseline for future comparisons. Due to cooperative data sharing arrangements, the District can now track graduates that actually enroll in college, not just get accepted. 67.5% of FUSD students enrolled in a two or four year college immediately following high school: 39.8% in a two year program and 27.7% in a four year school.

Over 14,000 students participated in summer school, taking original credit courses or credit recovery courses as well as literacy training, career-technical enrichment courses and internships, and programs introducing the English Language Learner program or offering redesignation support. Special education programs were also offered for pre-K through twelfth grade students.

A particular success story was evident in the summer literacy pilot offered by the African American Academic Acceleration Department. For five weeks, first through fourth grade African American students attended Baird for three hours a day. Parents too (87% participation) were engaged in training to help their students. Out of 10 large

districts that utilized the program this summer, the average reading gain in Fresno of 4.9 months was the best of all of them.

Special education students in the district have had consistently poor outcomes on testing, significant suspension and expulsion rates, and low graduation rates. Last year the District asked the Council of Great City Schools to evaluate its special education program. The council sent in a team that interviewed stakeholders, reviewed documents and wrote a lengthy and detailed report. All 200+ pages and an executive summary are available on the district website. The Board discussed the findings at its recent meeting.

The district has increased its investment in special education by 50% over the last 5 years. It has also more than doubled the budget of the Prevention and Intervention Department which has initiated a multi-tiered system of student supports and greatly increased the number of psychologists and social workers. The Council report found much to like about the district program, but stressed the need to better integrate special education at all levels of the district.

Many of the recommendations pointed to structural changes that would mean all teachers, principals, and district leadership recognize special education as part of their overall responsibility to serve the full spectrum of Fresno children. Most students receiving an appropriate education in a regular classroom and increasing levels of assistance provided as needs warrant seemed to be the focus of many of the recommendations. A five-year plan for implementation of the recommendations will be presented to the Board later this year.

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Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



Ending homelessness will take comprehensive efforts involving both city and county governments and private agencies. Street2Home, the city-county Partnership on Homelessness, was discussed by Dawan Utecht, Director of the county's Behavioral Health Department. Foundations for success include (1) leadership, alignment, and community engagement, (2) reduced inflow of individuals into homelessness, (3) improved crisis response, and (4) increase in permanent housing. While the Department is included, it will not take the lead in this endeavor, as the efforts include many areas other than behavioral health.

The Department and Fresno County Office of Education have formed a partnership to significantly expand behavioral health services for youth. Currently these include: (1) services integrated with the department's System of Care, (2) ages 0-22, (3) specialty mental health treatment, (4) prevention and early intervention, and (4) services in schools, at home, or in the community. These services will be delivered throughout the county.

This month the program reviewed was Exodus Adult Psychiatric Health Facility, a 16-bed facility providing 24/7 acute inpatient psychiatric services for individuals who are experiencing mental health crises; most clients are on involuntary holds. The goal is to provide treatment and to connect clients to appropriate services, so that they can live successfully in the community. There has been a reduction in the number of days that clients are hospitalized and a decline in the number of readmissions. The Board members are scheduled to conduct a site visit at Exodus this month.

Through a series of focus groups, public stakeholder meeting, and on-line surveys, the Department is collecting input from the community for the Mental Health Services Act Annual Update. You are encouraged to review public comments, and to add your own, on its website.

The next meeting of the Board has been rescheduled to September 12. We hope to see you there.

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Voter Services

by Liz Shields



Voter Services is gearing up for the November 6 election. We will be coordinating with Mi Familia Vota to carry out voter registration in local high schools and at other events such as the candidate forum for City Council District 3 in Fresno.

Pros and Cons for the eleven ballot propositions have been issued by the State League and our speakers will be using these when making presentations to local groups including retirement homes, library, civic and church groups. The State League has also made its recommendations for the propositions as follows:

- Proposition 1 Veterans and Affordable Housing Bond: Yes**
- Proposition 2 Homeless Housing Bond: Yes**
- Proposition 3 Water Bond: No**
- Proposition 4 Children's Hospital Bond: No**
- Proposition 5 Property Tax Amendment: No**
- Proposition 6 Gas Tax Repeal: No**
- Proposition 10 Local Governments Authority to Enact Rent Control: Yes**

See more details on propositions beginning on page 1

Easy Voter Guides in English and Spanish will be available early this month.. Please call Liz Shields (559-298-5183) if you need copies for a group.

Student Unit

by Lisa Bryant



Students have returned to classes and clubs at Fresno State. The Student Unit saw several members graduate last spring, but Gurleen Mander, former secretary of the Student Unit, has agreed to step into the role of club president. One of the first activities planned for the new semester is registering voters in the Free Speech area on National Voter Registration Day, September 25. The Student Unit is also planning on joining voter services members from the LWV Fresno in conducting voter registration and education in local area high schools.

We are looking forward to more events and exciting news about civic engagement on campus and off during the 2018-2019 school year.

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Last month the New York University School of Medicine—the alma mater of Jonas Salk, Albert Sabin, and Lewis Thomas—announced that it would no longer charge current or future medical students any tuition. Some health care experts think this may be the long-awaited but unexpected trigger that sets off an overhaul of our dysfunctional health care system.

NYU Medical School previously charged non-scholarship students \$55,000 yearly, about the average for private medical schools in the US. But all students will still have to come up with the \$27,000 yearly for living like a student in the NYC metropolitan area. While their equally talented peers in finance, information technology, law, or business are putting money into retirement plans, they will be sustaining or even augmenting their debt for three to seven years of specialty training *after finishing medical school*. At an average age of 32, they will begin making money starting \$250,000 in the hole.

I graduated from a public medical school—UCLA—in 1972; in-state, inflation-adjusted tuition was \$4,500 yearly. Now it is \$40,000 yearly, an outrageous outlier in 45 years of inflation.

Surprisingly, the adjusted cost of student room and board has not changed much in Los Angeles or New York. What has changed is the state contribution to higher education. Professors of medicine have seen a steady decline

in state support of their salary, with ever-increasing pressure to obtain public, private, and corporate grants to assemble their income. At UC San Francisco, my academic campus, professors get about 16% of their income directly from University of California general funds. In 2016 student tuition for the first time contributed more to professors' salaries than state revenues. A substantial portion of this realignment in funding has occurred nationwide since the Great Recession of 2007-8.

As I write this, I am looking at a *New York Times* op-ed piece by Elizabeth Rosenthal, a long-time NYT correspondent and critic of U.S. health care who now edits Kaiser Health News. Her article is titled “Medical School Shouldn’t Be Free for Everyone.” In responding to the NYU tuition action, she proposes that no or low tuitions should be reserved for medical students committed to primary care or to underserved areas.

Her assumption is that the current absurd fee schedule, concocted by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid and the AMA, will remain inviolable into the future. These fee schedules, despite multiple revisions, continue to reward procedures over problem management, and hospital care over office care. She also assumes that medical students know in advance what fields they want to pursue, or that they will be directed to the needed medical niches by tuition reduction.

I think she is wrong about both these issues, and that tuition abatement indeed may be revolutionary, if indeed NYU’s action will precipitate a flood of tuition resets, which I think is possible. If we accept the premise that medical school admission staffs can recognize high performing candidates, we will vastly increase the quality of undergraduates seeking careers in medicine. Lowering the cost of medical education, even without carveouts for students who admit they are headed for cushy practices, will generally reduce the economic incentives to enter highly specialized urban practice. It will lower income needs and expectations for all physicians.

More to the point, fee-for-service medicine cannot survive the information technology and the internet revolution. While medicine may be the last bulwark against networking, we are already seeing telemedicine, internet patient encounters, e-prescriptions, and value-based payment for services of health care teams that continuously, automatically report outcome data.

At this moment in time, the medical establishment is not on board with this trend, but patients will be increasingly sophisticated about their needs for coordinated systems to manage their health. These systems will require supervisors very much like primary care physicians.

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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.

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