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THE

FRESNO

VOTER



Our 84th Year

Join us on a Tour of the Fresno City Center

Thursday, September 12 *1 p.m.

2025 East Dakota * Fresno

Friday, September 6
Presentation Training
see page 5

Monday, September 9
Regular Board Meeting
4 p.m.
Stone Soup

Thursday,
Sept. 12
Member
Tour



Tuesday, October 1
Elections Office training
Details to follow

Monday, October 14
Regular Board Meeting
4 p.m. Stone Soup

City Center is a revolutionary concept created by Fresno Rescue Mission, akin to a hospital for life crises, where various specialists, non-profits, schools, and ministries unite under one roof to address people’s barriers, burdens, and new beginnings. The Center aims to transform lives facing insecurity, providing a wheel of opportunity through collaborative expertise, all in an environment like no other. It aspires to be the heart of a movement focused on rescuing individuals from crisis and fostering human flourishing.

Our tour will be led by Fresno Mission CEO Matthew Dildane.

You’ll be receiving more details in our Sunday digital calendar.



Matthew Dildane is an attorney and Fresno native. “There was a time when the Rescue Mission was just about giving you a bowl of soup and a bed,” he said. “But we decided in order to create true change both in individuals and in our community, we needed to be about something more. Now the focus of our organization is about being the first hand reaching out to the most vulnerable in our community and giving them a pathway to a better life. Our goal is to provide life change.”

It’s less than ten weeks away!

Are you going to be part of this historic election? Read about volunteer opportunities, ballot safety and how you can cut through the noise and get information about candidates on your personal ballot!

Thanks to Cathy Caples, Janet Baker and Robin Chiero for their special articles on voter-related issues. See pages 5.6.8



Please join us at a board meeting and find out more about what the League does and how you can help.

Co-President's Message

by Kay Bertken



August 2024 Board Minutes

Voter Services: Spanish speakers are needed for interpretation at presentations on registration and ballot information. FresnoLand and the League will host candidate forums as will CMAC. A registration table will be set up in front of Tagua at Riverpark.

By-laws: Our committee is meeting and will recommend additions, deletions and changes. This information will be ready for the Board to consider at its September meeting.

Housing: Supervisors have refused funding for the Shaw and Blackstone development. Fresno City denied funding for the project on Herndon and Prospect that has stirred controversy from the neighbors.

Transportation: Measure C will be on the ballot in 2026; at this time no changes have been approved.

Victories: The money for the Blackstone/Shaw project has not been returned to the state, although at this time the project has been denied. Our complaint over the illegality of Measure A, to change the timing of elections for sheriff and district attorney, has support from the State Attorney General, who is suing Fresno County over this proposition.

Defeat: The County is no longer participating in the Williamson Act which allowed local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners to restrict land use for agricultural purposes or open space. In return they received a reduction in property taxes.

Telephone: Dolores O'Neal has the office phone at home in order to monitor communications efficiently.

Although it seems as if we have been deep in election campaigns since the last Presidential election, it is becoming more intense as we are nearing November, the candidates are official, and the measures that will appear on our ballots have been determined. As media coverage of the election and ads are becoming more frequent, the ability to filter the massive amount of information and misinformation coming our way is becoming more challenging to process, especially with the possibility of the fakes that artificial intelligence can produce.



With sincere thanks to the Copper County League in Michigan, we have borrowed their work and posted their fact-checking lists on our website www.lwvfresno.org. You can find the list by scrolling down

the listing on the left of the home page to "Reliable Sources for Fact Checking." There are eleven sites listed with information about the provider of the service and what you can expect from the site.

The first entry in the list is "Media Bias Fact Check." In addition to a daily fact check, this site provides an interesting evaluation of the bias of thousands of media outlets. It ranks each of them as Left, Center Left, Least Biased, Center Right, Right, Pro Science, Conspiracy and Pseudoscience, Questionable Sources, and Satire. It interested me to see that the Fresno Bee, the Los Angeles Times, the San Francisco Chronicle and the New York Times are all listed as Center Left.

The designation of Center Left is explained as "often publishing factual information that uses loaded words". Their specific analysis of the Bee states "Overall we rate the Fresno Bee Left-Center based on editorial positions that moderately favor the left. We also rate them High for factual reporting due to proper sourcing and a clean fact check record."

Stay tuned for announcements of the work of the League's Voter Services Committee and opportunities to volunteer.

Kay

The Voter is a monthly publication of the League of Women Voters of Fresno

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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

Education

by Kay Bertken



School started on August 19 for Fresno Unified, Clovis Unified, and Fresno State students. It started August 14 for students in Central Unified

At its first meeting, FUSD trustees urged drivers to be particularly careful in school zones, given the accidents and near misses that students have experienced walking to and from their schools. Traffic does back up during the morning and afternoon hours when the school day begins and ends, often resulting in congestion around the school pickup areas. Everyone needs to slow down.

The Fresno Unified school board is meeting at the District Nutrition Center on Brawley while the downtown central office building gets a long overdue makeover. Another temporary change is the presence of Interim Superintendent Misty Her on the dais until a new superintendent is chosen sometime in the unscheduled future. A plan for that will likely occupy trustees this year.



**Interim Superintendent
Misty Her**

In the meantime and while she occupies that seat, Interim Superintendent Her is making plans. At the first Board meeting of the academic year, Ms. Her announced her focus on two priorities: improving student outcomes and providing excellence in customer service. Both those goals will be the subject of a pending Board workshop. She did say that to achieve a target double-digit increase in student achievement scores, there would be increased levels of support provided and an effort to refine curriculum. What exactly that means will evidently be discussed in the workshop.

In order to provide teachers with prep time and to meet with other staff and parents, students will be in class just half a day on Tuesdays this semester. After-school programs will begin as soon as school lets out, and the bus schedule will be adapted for that schedule.

kaybertken752@gmail.com

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



The Mobile Crisis Service Response Team is a newly mandated program that provides a non-law enforcement response to non-violent behavioral health crises, available 24/7, 365 days a year. The Team includes a mental health clinician and a case manager. The aim is to find the best options for the individuals' safety and well-being while preventing law enforcement involvement and hospitalization, whenever possible. Follow up occurs to ensure that individuals are linked to services. All County residents, regardless of age, are eligible for services. Access is available by dialing 559-600-6000 to speak to a trained professional. For situations with immediate danger, call 911.

The BHB is seeking a volunteer member who is an employee of a local education agency, as well as someone who is under 25. Contact Carolyn at evansalca@comcast.net

The Adult Services Committee heard from the Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program. This program is for adults with severe mental illnesses who cannot, or will not, accept mental health treatment due to the severity of their illness. The program attempts to engage individuals to accept voluntary treatment. If an individual continues to reject treatment, staff may file a petition in civil court, where a judge may require the person to accept treatment.

Our Board advocated for years for AOT to be adopted in Fresno County. We are disappointed to learn that the eligibility criteria are so stringent that few individuals can be accepted into the program. Additionally, it is even more difficult to meet the requirements for filing a petition with the court, and thus far NO petitions have been filed. However, over the past two years the program has accepted 43 individuals who did meet criteria, and still are working with eight of those individuals. We are hoping that some adjustment to the program might be made to make it easier to accept clients who desperately need this service.

(continued on page 6)

Honorees at Annual Awards Event

(see more on page 6)



Gloria Hernandez, Lipton Award; Blanca Mendoza, RBG Scholarship; Justice Jane Cardoza, Women's Equality Day Award photo by Andrea De Zubiria

The road to ruin:

How Fresno County's Transportation Future Got Stranded

This article reprints excerpts from *Fresnoland* with permission of its author Gregory Weaver

- ◆ Efforts to create a new \$7 billion Measure C spending plan for the 2026 ballot have stalled.
- ◆ A collaborative attempt between officials and community leaders to develop a more inclusive planning process broke down over disagreements about resident involvement in decision-making

County reports point to the logistics industry and industrial agriculture as the major culprit, whose massive growth since 2008 has caused big rig traffic to outpace population growth, causing 6,000 times more road damage per vehicle than passenger vehicles. Today, the county has a \$1.7 billion road maintenance shortfall.

One of the biggest political puzzles facing Fresno County in the next two years will be who pays for this new mess – the public or the guys with nuts, trucks and warehouses. And so far, nobody knows how to pick up the pieces and come up with a vision of Fresno County's future that everybody can agree on.

Recently, a vote at Fresno County's top transportation planning board to initiate planning for a new \$5 billion Measure C spending plan for the 2026 ballot was canceled after five members of the eight-member board either didn't show up or left in protest in the middle of the meeting



A group of power brokers has closed off contact with key opposition leaders which doomed the 2022 attempt for Measure C's renewal. Opposition against the plan became a bipartisan issue – opposed by both the Democratic and Republican parties, along with Fresno Unified teacher's union and the local carpenters union - made the issue a political necessity to solve.

(continued on page 7)

Last year HUD provided guidance where discrimination might be enabled by automatic or algorithmic tools used to make decisions about housing. I don't know for sure, but I'm guessing that these tools are frequently used without supervision to assure their unbiased application.

fourkasts@gmail.com



A growing number of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools have appeared on the market for analyzing data like rental history, employment, and income in order to predict a tenant's ability to pay rent or assess potential risk. These tools are efficient and helpful, but their use raises questions about how to be sure they are used ethically.

Usually, historical data is used to train AI algorithms. A USC Information Sciences Institute study in 2022 found that up to 40% of the "facts" in the databases fed to machines so they can think like a person are biased. Some skewed to the negative, others to the positive, but in all cases, societal biases are perpetuated. For example, women are seen more negatively than men, Muslims are associated with terrorism, Mexicans with poverty, policemen with death, priests with pedophilia, and lawyers with dishonesty. As a tool for tenant selection, AI tools that are used without substantial human review bring concerns about privacy, transparency, and potential discriminatory practices against prospective tenants.



Is your ballot safe? You better believe it!

by Janet Baker



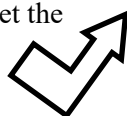
Rest assured, in Fresno County your ballot is safe.

Every voter is mailed a ballot. Ballots can be submitted through the Post Office or dropped in a drop box. Those who want to vote in person can do so at any Vote Center in the county.

Ballots that are mailed are delivered directly to the warehouse for processing. Ballots dropped in a drop box are picked up by two county employees and taken to the warehouse. These ballots are tagged to indicate the specific drop box that received the ballot and signed in by two warehouse employees. They are then put into sealed boxes and taken to the area for processing.

Ballots mailed or put in a drop box are carefully processed at the Fresno County Elections Warehouse. Specific areas, or “cages” are used for each step of the processing. No one person is ever allowed to be alone with a ballot. When employees and volunteers take their breaks, the cages are locked and no one is allowed to stay inside the cage.

- ◆ Checked-in ballots are taken to the cage where the envelope signatures are scanned to confirm the signature matches the signature used on the voter registration. If the signature is valid the ballot goes to the next step. If the signature does not match, that ballot is sent to a team to determine whether it is acceptable, and if not, a letter is sent to the voter to tell them a ballot was received and allow them time to remedy the defect.
- ◆ Envelopes with valid signatures are sent to an extractor where the envelope is separated from the secret ballot. The envelopes are retained for a period of time.
- ◆ The ballots are taken to another cage where they are unfolded and visually checked to make sure they are “clean” and not torn, showing food or liquid damage and are ready to be counted. If a ballot is not clean, then there is a hand duplicating process to get the ballots



Get involved in this election; Here are volunteer opportunities

by Cathy Caples



Volunteers are key to the success of LWV Voter Services every election cycle. But this election, we need your time more than ever. Voter turnout has been so low in many areas of Fresno County that we need to step up our voter education outreach.

First, we are partnering with Central California Food Bank to place voter information flyers into their pantry bags. Their Pantry Advisory Council recommended we have volunteers “walk the line” of waiting cars with the flyers to increase the importance of voting and to answer questions. Volunteers will arrive up to two hours before the cars start to move. These are early morning hours and a few afternoons with some Saturdays. Volunteer commitment time is two hours.

Second, *All About Voting* will include presentations at libraries, community organizations, churches and educational centers. Every day more requests are coming in. In order to meet the need for volunteers, especially Spanish speaking, we have expanded our recruitment beyond League members to the Fresno State Community Service Fair, Youth Leadership Institute, Building Healthy Communities, and League of Mexican American Women.

(continued on page 6)

ready for counting. Both the original and duplicate copies are identified by number and signed off by three people to ensure they match. No pens, pencils, markers, cameras or cell phones are allowed inside this cage.

- ◆ The ballots are pressed and put into sealed boxes to be counted on Election Day.
- ◆ The ballots are counted. There are approximately five IT specialists who have gone through several security investigation clearances who may have access to the machines that count the ballots. They alone are allowed into the room where the tabulators are located.

jkblawoffice@yahoo.com

A sold-out crowd enjoyed inspiring talks, great food and socializing at the Annual Women's Equality Day Awards Event on August 26 at the Unitarian Universalist Church. The three honorees included Blanca Mendoza, winner of the third Annual RBG Scholarship, who is graduating from San Joaquin College of Law this year; Gloria Hernandez winner of the Lipton Award for advocacy and volunteerism who is a life-long spokesperson for many causes; and retired Honorable Jane Cardoza, the first Latina Judge appointed to Superior Court in Fresno.

See photo page 4



Left to right: Dr Richard Bertken; Andy Levine; Janet Baker; Hanna Krebs; Amy Schmidt, Marianne Kast; Carolyn Evans

Photo by Andrea De Zubiria

Behavioral Health (continued from page 3)

The Children's Services Committee learned more about the Perinatal Wellness Center that provides supportive services for up to 12 months for women experiencing perinatal mood and anxiety disorders while pregnant or postpartum. Those needing more extensive treatment are assessed and either continue at the Perinatal Wellness Center or transition to another treatment provider. Supportive services for men also are provided.

Clinicians meet with clients in the office, in the home, or in other private locations in the community. Since the inception of the program, no person served has been lost to suicide nor has any person– served committed infanticide. The Perinatal Wellness Center is located at the West Fresno Regional Center at 142 E. California Avenue.

If you would like to receive notification of BHB meetings and of its various committees, you may contact Jeannette Dominguez at dominja@fresnocountyca.gov to be added to the distribution list. evansalca@comcast.net

Volunteer Opportunities

(continued from page 5)

Presentations will be given between September 14 and October 14. They will be dependent on securing volunteers, especially Spanish speaking. Commitment time is 2 hours. An orientation will be held on Zoom on September 6 on the importance of voting, propositions and other basic issues. Call Cathy (below) and the link will be sent to you.

If you would like to volunteer for an outreach volunteer opportunity or have any questions contact Cathy Caples at cathybcaples@gmail.com or 559-304-2687.

Other Election Volunteer Opportunities

- ◆ Phone Banking at the Elections Office: contact Sue Goldman at sueg4676@yahoo.com
- ◆ Open ballots at the Elections Warehouse: contact Janice Maroot at jmaroot@yahoo.com
- ◆ Candidate Forums assistance : contact Cathy Caples
- ◆ Ensuring candidates are listed in Vote 411: contact Robin Chiero at rchiero@comcast.net
cathybcaples@gmail.com

Measure C *(continued from page 4)*

Interviews show that the political situation is at a stalemate behind closed doors.

Talks between the two groups have fallen apart, said Veronica Garibay, a leader with the Transportation For All coalition and Leadership Counsel for Accountability & Justice, over basic issues of what role, if any, residents should have in crafting Measure C's \$5 billion spending plan.

Two people on Mayor Dyer's side, including Dyer, said that the framework they had been working on lost support with them because "it removed authority from the elected officials." FCTA board member and Fresno Councilman Miguel Arias described the existing approach, of having the public pay for the costs of road damage, as "the largest subsidy to the logistics industry" in county history.

For nearly 20 years, Fresno County had great roads. Then a warehouse and nut boom exploded a multi-billion dollar hole in road maintenance funding – one that local political leaders have been hesitant to climb out of on the backs of industrial projects.

In 2004, planners said truck traffic on local highways and legacy rural roads was up to four times the state average, growing 300% faster than population growth. A 2006 developer fee seemed poised to solve the problem – a fee for roads based on the impacts of businesses. But developers scored a coup. The money could only be used to build new highways and interchanges. not pay for the increased road maintenance caused by their operations.

When the nut and logistics boom hit full steam in the 2010s, Fresno County's roads went into free fall. In agriculture, the new nut harvests channeled

huge trucks on roads built in the 1920s.

In 2022, Fresno County's political leaders came up with a plan to pay for the damages. They decided residents, not the businesses banking record profits on their expanded production, should pay for the funding shortfall. The plan caused an uproar.

Opposition against the plan became a bipartisan issue – opposed by both the Democratic and Republican parties. In November 2022, the proposed spending plan failed to get the necessary 67% vote in Fresno County.

Measure C's failure pointed to a long-



standing problem in Fresno. For years, leaders have shied away from asking industry to shoulder a bigger share of infrastructure costs. In Fresno County, it is becoming increasingly common for politicians to rely on added sales taxes on local residents to help fill the budget shortfalls caused by low revenues from developer and business fee programs.

After the November failure, both sides, led by Dyer and Garibay, regrouped to see what they had in common. By October of last year, the group unveiled a framework for the 2026 Measure C renewal that place decision-making power in the hands of residents

The process hoped to culminate in a pivotal moment: a public forum scheduled for spring 2026.. It was a fundamental reimagining of the power structure of transportation planning, said Henry Perea, who was on Dyer's side.

Perea soon brought up these concerns to Clovis Mayor Lynne Ashbeck, Fresno Chamber of Commerce head Scott Miller, Parlier Mayor Alma Beltran, and Dyer.

"To create a document where a group of unelected people have basically all the power in their hands to create a document and that technical staff and the CEOs of these organizations really have no decision making authority: I have a problem with that," Perea said. In February, Dyer's side informed Garibay that negotiations were over and that FCTA and COG were going to start the process.

The most recent meeting began where the last battle over Measure C started – in a windowless room above an abandoned casino in downtown Fresno.

Most of the board members didn't show up. Frustrated that board members weren't there to give direction to new FCTA Director Terry Ogle, Arias walked out in protest. His departure caused the meeting to lose quorum – bringing proceedings to an abrupt halt.

Truck traffic is outpacing population growth, according to COG, and household incomes, stagnant for decades, are unlikely to make up for the gap. Even a \$3-4 billion investment in road maintenance risks is not keeping pace with annual wear and tear on roads. And yet – there have not been talks on looking to industry to pay for their wear-and-tear.

Over the last 40 years, about two-thirds of Fresno County's Measure C's impact has come from matching funds, But unless Fresno can find a way to think outside the box for road maintenance, the future of Measure C, as well as the region, may be stuck in the 20th century.

Climate Action

by Nancy Richardson



For those of us who have great air conditioning, summer has been a wonderful time to stay indoors and catch up with the many blogs, newsletters and books about the environment. It seems that more than a few of the skilled reporters who once worked for what we now call the “legacy media” have transitioned to produce quality journalism on specific deeply-researched topics, such as the environment.

What remains of the once-comprehensive Los Angeles Times includes a sharp focus on environmental matters with a team of excellent reporters. Other news purveyors seem to have decided that if they can only cover a little bit, climate change should remain a focus.

Our LWV Climate Action Committee exchanged dozens of relevant articles by emailing them to each other. There is so much information that letting it seep in a bit at a time is not unreasonable for those of us whose brains have slowed down.

Meanwhile, sometimes expeditiously and sometimes like molasses, local recycling of organic waste proceeds. I love seeing little green pails out for pickup every Friday where I live! There are more every week, as the process becomes normalized.

As for local organic waste recycling, it is helpful to know who your waste hauler is. Mid Valley Disposal and Republic are the main ones for residential pickup locally. Each hauler has its own particular rules regarding what goes where, depending on its capacity to recycle different materials. To ascertain who hauls your waste, check for a name on the bins. Or type in your address on the County’s recycling website. Or talk to whoever gets the bill. Then direct your questions to your hauler.

The City of Fresno has small pails on back-order, and thus will not conduct a robust marketing campaign until the order is filled. Schools often prefer to have presentations in the spring, so those are pending. Meanwhile, a City representative states that its customers can put out organic recycling in any other suitable container marked as Organic Waste, or simply add it to a Green Waste bin.

One day at a time. One League member at a time talking to neighbors, waste haulers, etc. Make a point of initiating conversations. They matter.

nmrichardson@comcast.net

Don't like confusion? Go to Vote411.org

by Robin Chiero



Voters who want to learn more about candidates and ballot measures have a variety of options. One of these is VOTE411.org, a nonpartisan online voter guide provided by the League of Women Voters Education Fund. We represent the entire county, so our responsibility with VOTE411.org is to collect information on hundreds of Fresno County races and measures.

But here is the good news: you don't have to sift through all this verbiage. When you go to VOTE411.org and enter your address you will see information customized to what is on your ballot.

Depending on a voter's address, races might include County Supervisor, School District Board Members, City Council Members and other City Officials, Community Service Districts, Water Districts, Healthcare Districts, and Irrigation Districts. It can be a challenge to learn about the candidates for many of these races. Every candidate in Fresno County is invited to provide information to VOTE411.org by answering, in their own words, two questions: (1) If elected, what are your top 3 priorities? and (2) What background, experience and/or education qualify you for this elected office?

In addition to the races, Fresno County also has 20 local ballot measures. There are ten bond measures for school districts, including Fresno and Clovis, and two for Community College Districts; city tax measures for Clovis, Sanger and Coalinga; measures related to city officials' terms (Huron, Firebaugh, and Selma); a measure to expand the board of directors for the Fig Garden Fire Protection District, and the Ashlan-Hayes Reorganization measure to confirm the decision of the Fresno Local Agency Formation Commission to approve the annexation of approximately 140 acres to the City of Fresno.

Volunteers in the Fresno League are working hard to collect candidate contact information and upload local ballot measure information so as to make Vote411.org as complete a resource as possible for Fresno County voters. Cut through the information barrage and click on Vote411.org.

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

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

What do you get when you join the League? All for one fee, you become a member of the Fresno, California and National Leagues and receive their newsletters. You may participate in League studies of issues; receive leadership training; hone your public speaking skills; become knowledgeable about local and state issues; learn more about government, natural resources and social policies as your time and interests dictate. You will also meet some interesting and friendly women and men who represent diverse backgrounds but find common ground in keeping abreast of current issues.

Yearly Dues Individual - \$70 ~ Family - \$100 (2 members, same address) ~ Student - Subsidized

Please send your check payable to the League of Women Voters, Fresno, with registration form (below), to: LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710.

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