



Annual Meeting Speaker Asks *How Do We Institutionalize Love?*

by Colleen Foster

In June, Dr. Mary Wardell-Ghirarduzzi, Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Professor of Communication at the University of the Pacific spoke to LWVSC Annual Meeting attendees on *How Do We Institutionalize Love?*



Dr. Wardell-Ghirarduzzi is a returning Stockton native, and she paid tribute to “the community that sent her out into the world.” She said Stockton, with Chinese, Filipino, Mexican, German, Greek, Italian, and South American neighbors, gave her a model of what an integrated society can be. After working at the University of San Francisco and other institutions of higher learning, she took a position at UOP, which President Callahan writes is striving “to become a model antiracist university and a national leader on diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education.”

She equated diversity, equity, and inclusion with *love*, love for everyone in our communities, whether those communities be civic, corporate, educational, or other gatherings of people. She stressed *appreciation* of others, which leads us to value, respect, cherish, prize, treasure, admire, regard, and acknowledge others. She urged us to acknowledge inequity and look for equity opportunities. Diversity includes representation in leadership roles for whoever has been marginalized. She said organizations of all types need to use their political, social, and economic capital to get the unrepresented *to be seen*.

There are many barriers to inclusion: class, education, gender roles, language, color and colorism. “Leverage your influence. Leverage your privilege” to make a difference. One way to do that – because everyone has a lot on their plates – is to meet people where they’re at. Help them with something they are doing, something they are committed to. Support people by supporting their children. Look for equity opportunities. One exhortation was of interest to the League in particular: integrate policy into action.

Dr. Wardell-Ghirarduzzi was a warm, thoughtful and thought-provoking speaker who proposed a framework for thinking about diversity, equity, and inclusion in everyday lives.

LWVUS Convention Report



Gretchen Newby and Jane Wagner-Tyack, LWVUS Convention Delegates

Convention Overview

by Jane Wagner-Tyack

Attending the 2022 LWVUS biennial Convention in Denver at the end of June as a delegate from LWVUSJC was a memorable experience. With the theme “Women Power Democracy,” this convention brought together over 1500 League members from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The arrangements were “hybrid”—hundreds of delegates in the ballroom for the plenary sessions, and hundreds more participating on Zoom. Zoom participants were able to vote on Zoom, while in-person delegates voted on their cell phones, tablets, or laptops, with tech people available in the back of the room for anyone having trouble getting the app to work for them.

Outside of plenary sessions, dozens of caucuses covered an amazing range of League interests and concerns.

The first day of plenary was also the day delegates learned that the U.S. Supreme Court had overturned *Roe v. Wade*. Before concluding that day’s plenary session, delegates voted in support of a resolution supporting “the rights of women and

those who can become pregnant to self-determination related to, and including, but not limited to bodily autonomy, privacy, reproductive health, and lifestyle choice.”

After plenary, 500 League members marched to the Colorado state capitol several blocks away from the Convention hotel in scattered showers and intermittent sun to join a rally protesting the Supreme Court’s decision. LWVUS President Dr. Deborah Turner and CEO Virginia Kase Solomon made brief remarks affirming the League’s position on access to abortion and women’s healthcare.



Convention Overview, continued



Following the opening plenary session of Convention, LWVUS League members join a rally at the Colorado state capitol in support of reproductive rights.

Delegates adopted a 2022-2024 LWVUS program for the Campaign for Making Democracy Work®: ensuring a free, fair and accessible electoral system for all eligible voters by focusing on Voting Rights, Improving Elections, Campaign Finance/Money in Politics, and Redistricting.

Then they amended that to add Direct Election of the President by Popular Vote, including both the National Vote Interstate Compact and the Abolishment of the Electoral College by Constitutional Amendment.

Finally, delegates added to the LWVUS program support for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, the ERA.

Delegates agreed to retain all current LWVUS Positions in the areas of Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resources, and Social Policy. LWVUS had recommended adopting by concurrence the LWV of New York's Health Care Update and the LWV of California's Criminal Justice Position. Delegates agreed, and they also approved concurrence with the LWV Connecticut's position on Digital Equity.

In addition to the resolution on reproductive rights, all four proposed resolutions recommended by LWVUS passed: immigration reform and advocacy (from LWV San Diego); declaration of climate emergency (from LWV Pennsylvania); support for DC statehood; and a resolution regarding murdered and missing indigenous people (from LWV Wyoming).

I so much appreciated the opportunity to meet League members from all of the United States, red states and blue, and to see the wide variety of issues that energize them and the whole League.

**“Community is the
antidote to despair.”**

**- Noelle Damico, Director of Social Justice,
The Workers Circle, speaking at a
pre-Conference panel on
“Women Power Democracy”**

National League “Transformation” Moves Forward

At the national Convention in 2018, after two years of study, LWVUS introduced a [Structure Transformation Plan](#), “a set of proposals that seek to grow League membership in number and diversity, strengthen our grassroots power, and bolster our ability to empower voters and defend democracy.” The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Lens was central to the development of this plan.

This plan involves

- formalizing League and membership rights and responsibilities
- upgrading League membership mechanics
- investing in state Leagues

At this year’s Convention, delegates voted to amend the LWVUS bylaws to adopt a unified membership system—one dues model across the country—and eliminate per members payments (PMPs). (The motion to make this change passed on 591 yay, 282 nay votes.) The objective is “a consistent and aligned membership system across all levels of League that will eliminate financial barriers to participation, create an equitable division of dues between levels of

League, and overall simplify mechanics of joining the League.”

The dues structure will include options for members to “pay what you can.” Net dues revenue will be split between all levels of League when a member’s dues payment is processed. The formula for the split is still being developed, but LWVUS will receive a third or less of the total net membership revenue.

Members nationwide, including here in San Joaquin County, have expressed concern about loss of autonomy under this new system. LWVUS answers that local and state Leagues “will maintain their local decision-making authority and will have less administrative burden to deal with, thus freeing their leaders and membership to have more time to engage in the ‘real’ work of the League: empowering voters and defending democracy.”

The LUVUS PMP will remain at \$32 for the 2022-2024 biennium. Any change in dues structure will happen after that.

Reminding convention delegates of the scene from “Jaws” where one of the shark hunters says, “You’re gonna need a bigger boat,” Taylor Flanery (LWV Lafayette, Indiana) said “We’re gonna need a bigger League.”

A Wealth of Inspiration and Great Ideas

by Gretchen Newby

First, thank you to the Board for having confidence in me to represent LWVSJC as a delegate. I attended all plenary sessions and voted. I marched. I talked to other LWV members from all over the US. And most importantly . . . I was inspired.

I was struck especially by the message that the League is going through an evolution that that will likely mean greater exposure to risk. Those who are looking for ways to curtail voting rights will see the League as an adversary. So the League has to become more nimble—a bold and courageous champion for the People, by the People, ALL the People. Sitting on the sidelines is never an option.

I also attended caucuses related to our local League's interests in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, registering voters, and including age diversity and new voters in our engagement with the community and our own membership. Here are some ideas from those caucuses:

Outreach to Young Voters and to New & Returning Citizens

A few facts:

Two thirds of youth talk to their friends about politics.

In addition to recently naturalized citizens, there are 5 million incarcerated people in the United States. Many of them will have their right to vote restored. Many have not lost their right because they are incarcerated.

Great ideas:

National Voter Registration Day is the day to push registration and a good time to work with partners:

- The Divine Nine (African American Sororities)
- LULAC League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
- One Hundred Black Men of America; National Coalition of 100 Black Women
- LGBTQ groups

Ask and listen rather than assuming that we know it all.

Engaging Youth

At the Caucus on Engagement of Youth (ages 14-24), the presenters were three young people, ages 14, 22 and 24 from the Anchorage Alaska LWV. They were all members of that local group, with full rights and obligations, and participated fully in governance. They were representing several others from their League in the same age group. Anchorage supported their youth engagement with a grant that enabled the hiring of part-time staff to support the youth engagement process.



A Wealth of Inspiration and Great Ideas (*continued*)

Several suggestions came out of the caucus on engaging youth, including expanding the registration of high schoolers to include a “get out the vote” campaign in the high schools with social media coverage, posters in schools, young spokespersons, and rallies.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

LWV has access to grants to enhance DEI, available to local LWV groups.

Great ideas:

- Partner: NAACP, Deltas and Kappas (sororities)
- Get information from the ACLU
- Look for minority vendors for events (catering, music, flowers, décor)
- Celebrate cultures and cultural events (Cinco de Mayo, Black Family Day, and so on)
- Talk about voter suppression and other issues of special significance/relevance to people of color
- Request help from members who have memberships in other organizations
- Reach out to other organizations (ACLU, community colleges) who have a long and successful history with Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Choose the messages and messengers carefully
- Pay attention to that which is most relevant to other cultures around the issue of protecting democracy.



LWVUS Marchers in Denver at rally in support of reproductive rights

EDUCATION FORUMS

Education in San Joaquin County: Where are we, and how did we get here?

by Colleen Foster

Education was a 2021-2022 LWVSJC issue for local Education and Advocacy. This past May, the League hosted two forums on education. At the first, panelists provided an overview of how local education impacts our community.

Kathy Hart, retired President of San Joaquin Delta College, shared statistics about how San Joaquin educational systems rank. Historian and lecturer Philip Merlo talked about how education in Stockton has changed over the decades, and what forces have led to those changes. Tom Pogue, Executive Director of Business and Policy Research at UOP, explained how education affects the local economy and government services.



Left to right, first forum panelists Kathy Hart, Retired President of San Joaquin Delta College; Tom Pogue, Executive Director of Business and Policy Research University of the Pacific; Jane Steinkamp, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, San Joaquin County Office of Education; and Phillip Merlo, Historian and Lecturer.

Jane Steinkamp, an Assistant Superintendent with the County Office of Education, explained one reason for the glaring discrepancy between graduation rates and those students who are college ready: grading practices that vary widely from school district to district, school to school, and classroom to classroom. She lamented the heavy-handed use of detentions and suspensions that were once used liberally as class management tools rather than to curb serious behavioral problems like violence, weapons, or drugs and which were imposed disproportionately against students of color. Not only did this practice deny students the education they were supposed to receive but it led too many to illegal activities during time away from school and onto a path that led to prison. The dearth of good teachers, especially in the sciences, adds to the challenges schools face in providing a good education for students.

Phillip Merlo, a native Stocktonian and historian, outlined the decline of the Stockton Unified School District from excellence to severely challenged. He said that from 1904-1950 Stockton Unified School District was the best performing school district in the country.

UPDATES ON LEAGUE ACTIVITIES

(Continued)

Merlo said that “The Stockton Method” developed by SUSD Superintendent James A. Barr was adopted by school districts across the country. According to the federal education census, SUSD was in the top percentile of students to go on to 4-year college and was the best district for students of color. Since the 1970s at least, SUSD has been struggling. What happened?

A confluence of local and national initiatives impacted Stockton socially, economically, and educationally. Urban renewal, a program of land redevelopment often used to address urban decay in cities, imposed unforeseen impacts in Stockton in its plan to replace much of the aging residential housing stock. Between 1956 and 1963, 12,000 housing units were demolished, precipitating a housing and homeless crisis that displaced 12,000-20,000 residents. Redlining, which wasn't outlawed until 1968, impacted residents of color who couldn't get home loans and who gravitated to south Stockton where homes were affordable. “White flight” to north of the Calaveras River left midtown floundering while property taxes that supported SUSD cratered.



In the 1970s, the resettling of southeast Asian refugees in Stockton impacted SUSD, bringing large numbers of students – and their families – who were not literate in English or in their native language. The question of literacy was not addressed in the 1970s and 80s, and the school district has not recovered since: Stockton has the largest illiteracy rate in the county.

In the 1990s, national and local developers lobbied to repeal regulations on housing finance, initiating the subprime lending practices that led to the financial meltdown of 2008 that made Stockton the foreclosure capital in the country. The revolving door of SUSD superintendents since 2000 has had a serious negative impact on the stability of SUSD's educational plans as well as on hiring enough well qualified teachers.

Urban renewal was intended to clear blighted areas of communities, creating better housing, business, and other positive developments. Welcoming refugees fleeing the devastation of the Vietnam War was the right thing to do. Making homes more affordable was a laudable goal. But each took its unanticipated toll and, along with damaging, racially-motivated financing practices like redlining and the decision of many to choose excluding neighborhoods, impacted school financing and enlarged the challenges of Stockton's largest school district.

Challenges Facing Schools, Students, and Parents

by Colleen Foster

Several speakers at the League’s May Education Forums outlined myriad challenges confronting educators, students, and parents.

Sandra Chan, a parent who is on the Lincoln Unified School District Board, said she believes that the education of children is foundational to our society and to our democracy—but that the lengthy COVID crisis has sorely tested our education system. Academic achievement has declined while behavioral problems have increased as students’ social-emotional learning capabilities have gone unnurtured. Children’s ability to resolve conflicts and to build friendships has been stunted and schools struggle to address the mental health needs of students that have been impacted by long bouts of distance learning and social isolation. Families are stressed and many experienced teachers are leaving the field. School site staff — whether in the office, cafeteria, or maintenance — have struggled to support students in their areas of responsibilities.

Janine Kaeslin, an Associate Superintendent with the County Office of Education, spoke about budget challenges facing schools. California is one of a few states that funds schools based on attendance rather than enrollment. Schools need to plan based on enrollment but are funded based on average daily attendance. The unpredictability of funding makes for precarious budgeting and uneven services.

Is there any good news? Yes: See the following article.



Moderator Donna Brown; Kathy Hart, Retired President of San Joaquin Delta College; Janine Kaeslin, Associate Superintendent of Student Programs and Services, San Joaquin County Office of Education; Sandra Chan, Parent and Lincoln Unified School District Board Member; Bobby Bivens, President of Stockton Branch of NAACP; Marisela Pineda, Executive Director of First Five San Joaquin; Suzy Daveluy, Retired Community Services Director, City of Stockton; and Christeen Ferree, LWVSJC President.

Helping Students Achieve

by Colleen Foster

Several speakers at the League’s second Education Forum offered observations and suggestions to help students achieve academic success.

Janine Kaeslin outlined several things that could help students achieve grade level parity: literacy rich environments, teacher training on early childhood development and inclusiveness, curriculum that includes “windows” to other experiences and “mirrors” that reflect a child’s life and culture. Having educators and families set reading goals, children having access to books, and family involvement in a child’s education have positive impacts on student learning.

Sandra Chan urged parents to read to their children, to prioritize school attendance and schoolwork, and to attend public library programs for children. She also stressed the importance of early intervention to detect and address learning disabilities, speech delays, or other barriers to learning. She also encouraged parents to know what’s happening in their child’s school and in the school district and give feedback on issues that arise.

Marisela Pinata of First Five San Joaquin said that there is a 13% return on investment for every dollar spent on early childhood development and learning. Quality early learning experiences, coaching for educators, and parent engagement are key factors for childhood successes. First Five believes in focusing on the whole family as part of their commitment to children zero to five. Improving child health through breastfeeding support, home health education, early intervention for special needs, and attention to oral health produce good early childhood outcomes. They also support the 211 Help Line which offers connections to needed services in 200 languages.

Suzy Daveluy, a librarian with the Stockton-San Joaquin County Public Library for 32 years before she retired as Community Services Director, detailed the many *free* services available at the public library, from storytimes for all ages and playtimes where children have opportunities to learn in a fun environment to homework help, in person or via Tutor.com, book clubs, and Book Buddies for reluctant readers. Storytime kits are available to take home. The Library is *the* literacy rich environment. She also gave a shout out to Read to Me, Stockton, a program started by former Mayor Ann Johnston that sends books every month to every enrolled child in Stockton from zero to five years old.

These are some ways Stockton has designed to help children succeed.



HIGH SCHOOL VOTER REGISTRATION



In May, at Kimball High School in Tracy, LWVSJC members registered students with members of Delta Sigma Theta Tracy Alumni Chapter. A partnership worth continuing!

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