

THE FRESNO VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS, FRESNO
1345 BULLDOG LANE, SUITE 4
FRESNO, CA 93710

Phone: (559) 226-VOTE (226-8683). Call for FAX number.
Web site: <http://fresno.ca.lwvnet.org>

APRIL 2008
Vol. 66:12

APRIL

T-Th 8 – 10 shifts **ASI Student Elections at Fresno State.** See article on page 4.
W 16 5 - 7 PM **League Board Meeting.** League office.
Sa 26 9:30 AM **LWVF ANNUAL MEETING. Speaker: Fresno Bee Columnist Bill McEwen!**
Plus a short presentation on high speed rail. Meeting and lunch at Grand Occasions. Save the date! Guests are welcome. See flyer.

MAY

Sa 3 9:30 AM – noon **New and Prospective Member Brunch at Stone Soup, 1345 Bulldog Ln.**
Please save the date.
Sa/Su 17/18 **LWVC LEADERSHIP COUNCIL: Be the Best You Can Be.** Sacramento. See page 6.

JUN

T 3 **PRIMARY ELECTION for congressional, state, and local candidates.**
M 16 5 – 8 PM **Date change: The Mayoral Forum** on poverty issues, originally planned for April with all 11 candidates, has been changed to June 16 with the run-off candidates. Saroyan Theater. See the President's Message on page 2.
13-18 **LWVUS CONVENTION 2008: Reaching New Heights Together.** Portland, Oregon. See page 6.

FRESNO STATE UNIVERSITY ELECTIONS APRIL 8 – 10 Calling all new and seasoned League volunteers!

Fresno State students will hold their Associated Student elections for student body president, vice-president and senators, and a couple of referendums on April 8-10. Time slots are as follows for the poll workers:

- Tuesday April 8th noon – 3 p.m. 3 – 5 p.m.
- Wednesday April 9th 9 a.m. – 1p.m. 1 – 5 p.m.
- Thursday April 10th 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

One Shift for Ballot Counters: Thursday April 10th 1:30 – 4 p.m.

Other times can be arranged if these time slots don't fit your schedule.

The four polling places will be as usual at the University Student Union, the Satellite Student Union, the South Gym and Joyal Administration Building – pick your favorite spot. Parking passes are available.

Please call Liz Shields at 298-5183 or 278-4050 or email at elizs@csufresno.edu to help with the election

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
Francine Farber, 226-5455

Dear Friends:

The committee planning this April's Mayoral Forum on the theme of Poverty and Possibilities in Fresno, representing numerous local organizations including the League, winced when we learned there were seven candidates. But as the list grew to nine, ten, and finally eleven mayoral hopefuls, we did some serious math and realized that with introductions and some questions from the audience, we would have to severely limit response time to planned questions.

We wanted this to be a meaningful experience for our audience as well as for the candidates, and we regretfully decided to postpone the Forum until after the Primary election on June 3. It is likely that with this large a field, one candidate might not get a majority of votes, thus necessitating a runoff election on the November 4 ballot for the candidates who received the highest number of votes.

As of this writing we were able to change our contract with the Saroyan Theatre management and are planning to hold a forum for runoff candidates for Mayor on Monday, June 16 from 5 to 8 p.m. The forum will be free and open to the public; we have included time for audience participation. Thanks to a generous sponsor, ample refreshments will be served. Although it is two months away, please mark June 16 on your calendar and plan to attend this important community event.

Meanwhile, the Forum sponsors have not forgotten about the field of eleven candidates. We are planning to devise three questions in areas related to poverty: housing, crime and jobs, and give all the candidates the opportunity to write a one-page response to the three questions. The questions and responses will be posted unedited on a local web site. It is very possible that our League's website will be the host, so stay tuned and we will keep you informed.

Francine

MARCH BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

1. The Second Annual New and Prospective Member Brunch will be held on Saturday, May 3 in

the large meeting room at Stone Soup from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Board members will be present to describe their roles in our League and the various programs in which we participate. The League's efforts in education and advocacy will be highlighted.

If you have a friend or acquaintance who might like to join, please give her or his name, address and phone number to Francine Farber, so an invitation can be sent.

2. The History-Social Science mini-grants for teachers in Fresno County, funded through a bequest from the I & R Billings Foundation, are in the late planning stage.

Letters and forms are ready for initiation in May, with a formal kick-off for the teachers planned for September 19, Constitution Day.

Eric Von Berg to Speak on High Speed Rail

Eric Von Berg, Planning Manager of the URS Corporation, which performed the EIR study for the California High Speed Rail Authority, will give a 15-minute presentation at the LWVF's Annual Meeting. According to von Berg's enthusiastic vision: "the California High Speed Train will fly Californians up and down the San Joaquin Valley at speeds up to 220 MPH, on over 700 miles of track, connecting Fresno with San Francisco in just over an hour and Los Angeles in 1 1/2 hours. The safest way to travel world-wide, high speed trains will provide reliable transportation for the Valley, regardless of weather, while removing 57-million passengers off our roads each year, improving air quality in our Valley."

Von Berg's talk will follow our scheduled guest speaker, Bill McEwen, who will speak on Engaging Voters and Increasing Voter Turnout. We encourage you to invite a guest to lunch and the program. Please share the enclosed flyer with a friend. Note the deadline for reservations is April 14, though the meeting date is April 26.

EDUCATION
Kay Bertken, 226-2720

At the state and local level the biggest news is still the state budget crisis and a possible \$4-billion dollar reduction to state education expenditures, a projected \$35 million dollar cut to Fresno Unified and \$8.7 million to Clovis Unified. These cuts are being planned at the same time that the Governor's task force released a new report on the condition of education in the state, calling for new initiatives including preschools, full day kindergartens, merit pay for teachers who raise test scores and targeted funding for low achieving schools and districts.

This month the Fresno Unified Board of Trustees heard a report of the success and expansion of its AVID program, a national project that promotes college aspirations and prepares students who might never have dreamed of continuing their educations beyond high school. About 87% of FUSD students would be the first in their families to attend college. Currently 1,640 AVID students are enrolled in programs at every high school and middle school in the FUSD, with expansions planned to elementary schools. The program is facilitating the accelerated development of academic English among its English learners. It has also had great success expanding access and supporting students in Advanced Placement classes. Nearly 80% of these AVID students complete college eligibility requirements.

A less positive report involved the state of expulsions and suspensions in the district. While numbers are generally down in both categories over the last three years, last year there were still more than 350 expulsions and more than 7,000 suspensions. Issues of concern include the lack of any continuation-school-type placement at the middle school level, inadequate intervention elements at the County expulsion school site and the overrepresentation of special education students among those expelled. While just 10% of FUSD students are in special education programs, they make up 19% of those students up for expulsion.

Recognizing the need to engage students beyond the classroom, the Board has approved a list of priority athletic projects to be built at the high schools in the district. The City of Fresno has committed a portion of the needed funding for the projects. A new joint use agreement with the City is also being formulated, in anticipation of further cooperative efforts.

VOTER SERVICES REPORT
Liz Shields, 298-5183

Fresno State Student Elections
(April 8th, 9th and 10th)

Calling all volunteers to monitor student elections at Fresno State:

Tuesday April 8 Noon -3 p.m. & 1 - 5 p.m.
Wednesday April 9 9 a.m.-1 p.m. & 1 - 5 p.m.
Thursday April 10 9 a.m.-1 p.m. polling place
& 1:30 p.m.- 4 p.m. counting ballots.

Call Bette Noblett 439-1361 or John or Liz Shields 298-5183.

SEIU Delegate Election
(Friday, March 13 and 14)

League members monitored two convention delegate elections for Service Employees International Union in March. **Margaret Johnson and Liz Shields** monitored the one in Visalia, and Francine Farber and Jane Worsley monitored the one in Fresno.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT
Terri Figgs, 431-7274



**The League Needs
You To Make
Redistricting Reform
Happen!**

The League of Women Voters of California (LWVC) has given high priority to getting a fair and open redistricting process in California. The LWVC has pledged to help qualify the California Voters First Initiative for the November 2008 ballot. Over the next few months, a million signatures are needed on petitions to put this redistricting reform plan to a vote. Redistricting is one of your League's priorities for the current year.

How can we help? Every member will receive a petition in late March, with three or four signature spaces.

Sign it yourself, get a few more signatures from your family, friends or colleagues, and mail it right back to the address on the form. You should receive your petition via bulk mail this week. Please return your petition quickly. It's easy!

To volunteer to take more petitions, please email the LWVC Advocacy Assistant at myoung@lwvc.org.

NATURAL RESOURCES
Mary Savala, 431-1227

Dairy Ordinance

No settlement agreement has been reached on the complaint filed against Fresno for not preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on the new Dairy Ordinance adopted by a 3 to 2 vote on the Board of Supervisors last October. Counsel for Medical Advocates for Healthy Air (MAHA), along with a resident of western Fresno County, continue to meet with the County. United Western Dairy's "environmental arm," Dairy Cares, has attempted to insert itself into the process, claiming that its interests would be compromised if an EIR were to be prepared. Conversations with Supervisors who voted for the ordinance are ongoing in hopes that agreeing to amendments to the ordinance would solve the problem of no EIR and make the whole expensive litigation process go away.

In the meantime, **Bar 20 Dairy, a new 17,000 cow dairy in west Fresno County, has been operating since January 2008 without its application for a permit from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District yet being approved by the District.** Neither the Air District nor the County has made an effort to date to enforce the requirement that the dairy have a permit to operate. Bar 20 is owned by Producers and the Shehady family.

Jessie Morrow Mountain

The draft EIR for the Cemex conditional use permit to mine Jessie Morrow Mountain has been put on hold by the applicant. It appears that Cemex wants to do additional surveys and studies.

Friant Ranch

The draft EIR for the Friant Ranch gated community for seniors has not yet been released for comment.

Measure C

The Fresno County Council of Governments (COG) and Fresno County Transportation Agency (FCTA) are **finishing the final approvals of the implementation procedures for spending Measure C revenues.** Procedures include how the agencies are to apply for funding and report expenditures as well as detailing such special programs as taxi script for senior citizens and a school bus replacement program. **One of the major challenges remaining is setting priorities for spending "regional transportation revenue,"** those funds for urban and rural road

improvements and construction such as braided ramps on SR 180 and construction of Veterans Blvd. **Discussion of priorities** includes consideration of bonding for construction and escalating costs, mixed with the politics of the county and its cities, each eager to have its projects finished first.

The Measure C Citizens Oversight Committee has been working with staff to prepare **budget report forms for the agencies** to make sure that their planned expenditures of Measure C funds in line with Voter approval of the tax. The Committee also reviewed the **Measure C Local Agency Handbook guidelines** that the cities and the county use to apply for funds and implement expenditures.

Joe Levy, the member representing Supervisorial District 2 on the committee, has resigned to take an appointment as one of two public members on the Fresno County Transportation Agency. **A new member must be appointed to the Oversight Committee 90 days from the resignation** (sometime in May). The notice is posted on the COG web site, published in the Bee, and has been mailed to former applicants.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Jane Worsley, 431-0360

Our heartfelt thanks to the many League members who donate their time and talent to the LWVF. We also appreciate those Leaguers who donate above their dues to the LWVF general funds. We accomplish much with our wits and energy, but equipment and office supplies do take money, so we greatly appreciate these recent contributors: **Charlotte Pavelko, Mary Savala, Lynne Rodriguez, Bette Noblett, Shirley Valett, and Clara Touya.**

Donations to the League of Women Voters Education Fund are tax deductible, as is the League's convenient Vehicle Donation program. I donated a vehicle last year and was amazed at how efficient the process was.

EVERY CAR COUNTS!
Support the League—Donate Your Vehicle

- | | |
|---|---|
| Donate your car, truck, RV, boat or motorcycle -- Running or Not! | * Tax Deduction * Free Pick-up * We Do Paperwork! |
|---|---|

CALL 1-800-320-0476 **www.lwvc.org**

League of Women Voters of California Education Fund

LWVCEF: Encouraging informed participation in government and influencing public policy since 1920.

Part II: Adult Mental Health Services in Fresno County completes the summary of February's LWVF Lunch & Learn discussion of mental health in Fresno County, with speakers Helen Siporin, Vice-President, NAMI Fresno; Curt Thornton, Secretary, Mental Health Advisory Board; and Dave Weikel, Executive Director, Mental Health America, Central Valley. Here is a recap of Thornton's presentation.

**ADULT MENTAL HEALTH: The Need Goes On
Curt Thornton, 288.1856.**

For the past 5 years, Curt and Jeanine Thornton have led a support group for families of the mentally ill. Drawing upon their experience, Curt provided several examples of the difficulties that families have faced—a family member lost to suicide, the impact of an ill husband/father on wife and family, the angst of a son's repeated returns to jail or prison because of his mental illness. The examples and their accompanying heartbreak go on, and it's not getting easier for families.

For many experiencing severe mental illness, our public mental health system is the *only* resource. Yet, Curt observes, this system (operating at the county level) "... goes from one level of chaos to another." Fresno's mental health system has experienced several successive years of budget cuts; although the population continues to grow; presently, the outlook is bleak. While mental health managed to stay within its reduced budget this year, the projected revenues have not been generated ... hence, we face another budget shortfall.

Even prior to the State's most recent budget

problems, Fresno County's outlook on the coming budget year looked ominous. Now, with the State proposing further cuts, the question arises, "What further can be cut?" The County does not appear to have the money to make up these shortfalls; yet how much more can our flailing mental health system endure?

One small area of hope lies in the **Mental Health Services Act** (formerly Prop. 63, now referred to as **MHSA**), which is providing Fresno County with **five new adult programs--one enhancing senior mental health, an enhancement of dual diagnosis training for staff (co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse), a new peer wellness and recovery center, an expansion of a homeless mentally ill program, and a program aimed at those frequently re-entering crisis services.** Yet, behind this bright spot looms a dark shadow. The homeless program to be *expanded* with MHSA funds lost its base funding during last summer's State budget process. **As the wellness and recovery center is phased in, the County's existing peer support program is phased out.** So, the net gain of MHSA is limited at best, and the start-up process for programs has been slow.

The plight of individuals and families affected by mental illness has been steadily worsening. There is a clear and definite correlation between declining public mental health budgets (i.e., services), and an increase in personal suffering. Our public system affects real people, just like all of us. Curt urges the League to continue its emphasis on mental health, and asks that we encourage our political leaders to make every effort possible to support mental health.

**~*~ MEMBERSHIP ~*~
Sue Sheragy, 243-9305**

Welcome New Members

Renee Rasmussen
658 E. Beverly Way
Fresno, CA 93704

Theresa Real
3680 W. Pomegranate Ln.
Fresno, CA 93711

Mona Nyandona
8153 N. Cedar, Unit 218B
Fresno, CA 93720

Regretfully drop

George Bursik, Betty Boos, Lotte Gammon, Julia Jorgensen, Loretta Kensinger, Laurie Leifer, Ofra Pleban, Sarah Sharpe, Eve Sproule, Francis Squire, and Lupe Williams.

Please Update Your Roster

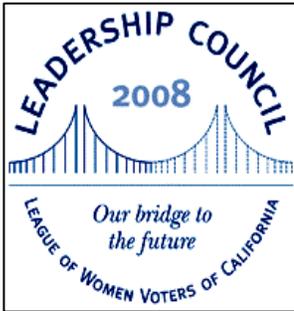
Patsy Anderson, 5515 N. Fresno St. #204, patsyand@comcast.net; Michelle Jorgensen, 11232 N. Burnhaven Way, Fresno, 93730-7008; Sara Hedgpeth-Harris, sara.hedgpeth.harris@gmail.com;

Growth and Networking at the State and National League Levels!

We are encouraging as many members of the Fresno League as possible to take advantage of the workshops and networking opportunities offered at two west coast venues in May and June 2008. Update your skills and learn new techniques for our fast-changing society.



LWVC Leadership Council, Sacramento, May 17-18 (preliminary activities May 16)



OUR BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE

Leadership Council is the place for established and emerging League leaders to **enhance your skills** and **learn the most current information regarding League issues** and **discuss the vision for our future**.

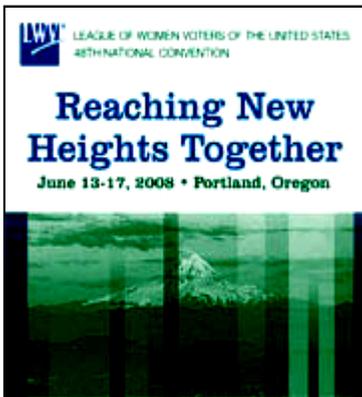
The world in which League operates is constantly changing and it is important that we adapt. Intelligence has been defined as the ability of an organism to adapt to its environment. League members are known for their exceptional intelligence which is the reason League has been a strong and respected organization for almost 90 years.

At Council, you will be provided with information and workshops to prepare you for success as a League leader in the 21st Century and beyond. As a result of your commitment to League by continuing to adapt, future generations will celebrate League's 200th year anniversary with pride and gratitude for those who came before them.

Attend for one day at reduced rates. Details at <http://www.ca.lwv.org>.

**Check out the workshops at: <http://ca.lwv.org/lwvc/aboutlwvc/council/2008/workshops.html>
Non-league members are welcome and get a great introduction to the League. Let's carpool!**

LWVUS CONVENTION 2008: Reaching New Heights Together. Portland, OR, June 13-17



WHY SHOULD YOU ATTEND THE LWVUS CONVENTION IN JUNE?

Have you experienced the excitement of being with a thousand people who care about our democracy? Networked with others who have achieved great things at local, state and national levels? Learned from national speakers, professional trainers, League members and staff with special expertise?

Don't miss the LWVUS National Convention on June 13-17 in Portland, OR! Join with Leaguers from all over the country to discuss, debate, have fun and meet the amazing people who, like you, care about the League of Women Voters.

See the Convention Preview on the LWVUS Members website for information about registration.

Due dates for LWVUS Convention 2008:

- Hotel reservations (by availability, first-come, first-served) - May 22
- Convention registrations without incurring a late fee - May 23
- Cancellations/refund requests - June 11

Visit the LWVUS Members website for more information, and e-mail your questions to lwv@lwv.org .

President
 Francine Farber, 226-5455

Treasurer
 Jane Worsley, 431-0360

Membership
 Sue Sheragy, 243-9305

Voters Service
 Liz Shields, 298-5183

VOTER Editors
 Patsy Anderson, 439-2377
 Liz Shields, 298-5183



JOIN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS!
Men and Women of Voting Age Making Democracy Work

MISSION: The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through voter education and advocacy on issues.

NONPARTISANSHIP: 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.

TO PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS: For more information, please leave your name and phone number on the League message phone, 226-8683, or contact our Membership Chair, Sue Sheragy, at 243-9305. Prospective members receive one issue of *The Fresno Voter* at no cost.

JOIN US! Members receive newsletters national, state and local Leagues, may access local, state and national League websites and list-serves, and may participate in League studies of issues. Yearly Dues: ~ Individual - \$60 ~ Family - \$90 (2 members, same address) ~ Student - \$30

Please send your check payable to the League of Women Voters, Fresno, with your registration form (below), to: LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Suite 4, Fresno, CA 93710.

Name: _____ Ph. _____ E-mail _____

Address: _____

- - - - - Reminder, cut and turn the section below so fold is on bottom - - - - -

== The Fresno Voter, April 2008 ==



League of Women Voters Fresno, Inc.
 1345 Bulldog Lane, Suite 4
 Fresno, CA 93710

Non-Profit
 Organization
 U.S. Postage Paid
 Fresno 93706
 Permit #896

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

INSIDE:

- Page
- 1 Calendar, FSU Election Project
 - 2 President's Message, Board Highlights, High Speed Rail Redistricting Measure: Petitions sent to every member!
 - 3 Education, Voters Services,
 - 4 Natural Resources, Treasurer's Report, Vehicle Donation
 - 5 Membership, Mental Health
 - 6 LWVC Leadership Conference, LWVUS Convention 2008
 - 7 Thanks to our sponsors!