



The Fresno VOTER

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HAPPY Holidays!

Calendar

Saturday, December 6 Holiday Party —See flyer inside, page 10.

December 17—Regular Board Meeting cancelled

January 17—Yearly Program Planning Meeting —Important for all League Members to be present. League office at Stone Soup, 9:00 a.m.

January 21—Regular Board Meeting, 5:00 p.m.

April 25—Annual Meeting: Save the date; details to follow

An Open Letter to the Next President

From *The National Voter*, October 2008

As the League of Women Voters looks to January 20, 2009, we see hard work ahead for the next President of the United States.

Over the years, America's leaders have allowed crucial problems confronting our country to fester and worsen.

Climate change threatens our public health, environment and economy. Our **health care** system leaves 47 million Americans uninsured while wreaking havoc on the economy because of skyrocketing costs. We have not addressed the status of 12 million unauthorized immigrants living and working in the United States, and we have an **immigration system** that is incapable of dealing with either legal or illegal immigrants. Last but not least, **growing inequality** in wealth and incomes threatens the very fabric of our society, turning the United States into a land where the rich keep getting richer and everyone else struggles just to get by.

..... When the election season of partisanship and political wrangling is over, it will be time for real action to build a better, stronger America—a nation that is true to its ideal of fairness and opportunity for all.

The League of Women Voters believes significant progress is possible on each of the four issues we have identified as priorities for the new Administration. We look forward to working with the new President to make this presidency a historic one, during which the people and their elected leaders cast aside the chains of partisanship, complacency and fear, and embrace real action to build a better nation and a better world together.

Sincerely,
Mary G. Wilson
President, League of Women Voters of the United States.

CSUF STUDENT UNIT

By Diane Blair 244-0239

The group received official recognition from the university on October 17, 2008.

The "Prop Talk" Event held on October 28 at CSUF was a huge success. The event was well attended—approximately 75 people made it standing room only. Next time we'll know to reserve a much larger room. We had representatives speaking on both sides of the issues for Prop 2, 4, 8, and 11. Mary Savala



California State University, Fresno

did a wonderful job representing the League on Prop 11.

Our student unit is regrouping post-election and we are trying to identify some priorities for what our group might like to do next with their time and energy. At our last meeting, students expressed an interest in the following issues:

- The impact of the state budget crisis on higher education, especially how it is impacting the CSU system

Continued on page 4

President's Message

There was much to be thankful for this Thanksgiving just past. I think we would all agree that the peaceful transfer of power from one administration to another, which at times may have seemed dubious, continues to be the most consistent feature of our republic. Whichever candidates you supported, you must have been glued to the television set for weeks, as I was.



And speaking of the elections, LWVF owes a very large round of applause to Board member Liz Shields, our Voter Services vice president, who organized and led countless candidate forums and proposition discussions along with other League volunteers. These ranged from a presentation at San Joaquin Gardens to an SRO presentation at the Woodward Park Library for Hadassah to classes at the Fresno Adult School.

Many of you have had the pleasure of meeting and working with Liz on election-related events. Others who have not met her might be interested in learning that Liz was born in Northern Ireland. After graduating from college she became a volunteer high school teacher in Botswana where she met her husband, who was a Peace Corps volunteer there. They spent a year in Turkey where Liz did biochemistry research at Hacettepe University in Ankara. They traveled through Iran, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Afghanistan and Russia before returning to Michigan for graduate studies. Liz became a U.S. citizen in 1977, shortly after their daughter was born. I have heard Liz very often refer to herself as an immigrant, but surely an unusually well-traveled and educated one!

Liz is semi-retired from teaching at Fresno State. In addition to her Board responsibilities at LWVF, Liz is a coordinator for the American Cancer Society Reach to Recovery program.

Growing up in Northern Ireland, she experienced voting irregularities and district gerrymandering, so you can understand her passion for the importance of voter education and universal suffrage.

All of us are in her debt for the dedicated, heart-felt and outstanding work she performs for LWVF.

Francine

Bob Valett

With deep sorrow we note the passing of Dr. Bob Valett on November 14, 2008. Dr. Valett, a clinical psychologist and professor at CSUF, was a member of our League since 1992. He was interested in juvenile justice and lobbied for a study of this topic at a League state convention. His wife, Shirley, was League president from 1989-1991 and has been a member since 1971.

Contributions may be sent to LWVF, the Unitarian Universalist Church, 2672 East Alluvial, Clovis, or the Fund for the San Joaquin River Parkway, 1550 East Shaw, Fresno.

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. on December 6 at the Unitarian Universalist Church.

Lotte Yael Gammon

Sadly, another former League member passed away on October 31. Lotte Yael Gammon was born in Germany, emigrated to Palestine and then the United States, and spoke five languages. She was a biochemist and interested in politics, conservation and child development.

LWVF gratefully acknowledges contributions from the following individuals:

Helen Siporin
Lynne Rodriguez
Margaret Thorburn
Georgia Sisson
Marion Tuck

MEMBERSHIP

LWVF has added two new members. They are:

Trudi Thorn
740 East Buckingham
Fresno, CA 93704
Phone 229-9541

Susan Kuhn
2996 East Joaquin Place
Fresno, CA 93726
Phone 224-2368

Legislative Report

By Terri Figs 431-7274

Blueprint Roundtable

The Fresno Roundtable committee received the Valley Blueprint Modeling results of the three scenarios under consideration by the Blueprint Roundtable Advisory Committee (BRAC) in a presentation by Kiristine Cai of Fresno COG. That presentation is on the website at www.fresnocog.org. The Fresno Roundtable was asked by the BRAC to endorse one of the scenarios.

The scenario names are Recent Trends (essentially status quo), Locally Preferred and Valley Hybrid. Locally Preferred is the scenario where all the counties' preferred scenarios were blended. A significant feature is that it is based on eight dwelling units per acre. The Valley Hybrid is based on data modeling done at UC Davis and calls for 10 dwelling units per acre. This is the scenario endorsed by the BRAC. There was considerable discussion about how that data was generated. Diane Guzman, representing Eastside Cities, expressed difficulty with endorsing this density. She felt that it was just a matter of time before AB 32 and SB 375, guidelines that aren't known yet and won't be available until next fall, become regulatory mandates so whatever the Roundtable endorsed had to be politically viable as well as achievable. Higher densities are going to occur in the major metro areas, so what does this average density mean to the City of Reedley? This specificity is lacking in the scenarios. Nathan Magsig, vice chair of the Roundtable and Georgina Vivan, a consultant, stated that the Blueprint will be a dynamic document and will be adapted over time to new economics, realities and regulations.

Various committee members spoke in favor of or against endorsing the BRAC choice.

In the end, the roundtable voted to endorse the Locally Preferred scenario.

There will be a Blueprint Summit designed for more public input on January 26 at the Fresno Convention Center.

Agricultural Land Conservation Commission

On November 4 the Fresno County Board of Supervisors approved the Agricultural Land Conservation Commission recommendations that the Board raise the minimum parcel/contract size for non-prime land to 160 acres on the East side and 320 acres on the west side of the county for inclusion in the Williamson Act.



Issues that are still pending include: increasing the minimum size for non-prime land areas; and initiating non-renewal on all parcels that are not involved in a viable farming or grazing operation and do not meet

the minimum parcel size for prime and non-prime land county-wide.

Property owners can continue to apply for creation of new home site parcels, since elimination of the provisions to allow home site exception parcels will be reviewed during the General Plan review and Zoning Ordinance Update period, which should be completed in 2009. The policy restricting land subdivision while under a Williamson Act Contract was implemented immediately. This policy was the subject of much discussion during the Nov 13 Ag Land Commission meeting. Various scenarios were cited as being viable exceptions to this policy. The conclusion was to direct staff to draft a letter to be given to the Board of Supervisors with the concerns expressed about the land subdivision provision.

MEMBER SURVEY

Members whose dues are paid in October have already received a one-page survey designed by the Board to get your feedback on League membership. A number of them have been returned already in the dues envelopes. We do appreciate your cooperation. If you have not returned your survey yet, please complete it (should take no more than five minutes) and place it in the return envelope.

Members whose dues are paid in April will receive the survey at that time.

Several members have asked to have *The Voter* sent to them via email. The problem at the present time is that many of our members do not have computers, so many copies would still have to be mailed. We mail enough copies now to take advantage of the bulk mail rate. A more limited number of copies to mail would result in higher postage rates, actually increasing costs. At some point in the future if it becomes more practical to send *The Voter* by e-mail, we will certainly consider doing so.

Natural Resources

By Mary Savala 434-1227

Measure C

The Measure C Citizens' Oversight Committee met on November 13 to review the 2007-08 expenditure reports and 2008-09 budgets for the cities and the county. Expenditures, except for one or two issues of providing bike lanes on new construction, are in order. **The Fresno County Transportation Authority and COG staff with the advice of the Oversight Committee have worked hard to provide assistance on understanding the new programs, conditions and restrictions for Measure C Extension Revenues.** The Oversight Committee has moved its annual report on the 2007-08 expenditures to February to be distributed with the Fresno County Transportation Report. **It is exciting to see the big infusions of revenue to public transit. The results for better and more convenient service can already be seen in 15 minute headways, longer days, free rides for seniors and clean air buses.** The school bus replacement program will be implemented this winter and spring. Van pools and senior taxi scrip are in effect. The Regional Transportation Impact Fee Ordinance is being processed through the Board of Supervisors and the municipalities. Legal complications in writing a standard ordinance have caused the absolute final date for passing the ordinance to be early in the next year.

Air Quality

LWVF's little corner of action on air quality is focused now on the request of Gary MacDonald Homes to the City of Fresno to be relieved of the requirement to provide sidewalks on more than 16 acres of new development in Copper River Ranch (CRR). The developer is arguing that providing trails in the development means sidewalks are not needed and, besides, the developer's development rights were granted prior to city regulation requiring sidewalks on both sides of the street in new development. The City Planning Commission voted 3 to 3, resulting in non-approval of the request. An appeal has not yet been scheduled for the City Council. Sidewalks in CRR are air quality mitigation measures in the CRR Environmental Impact Report (EIR). League only heard about this request for modification through the grapevine and has formally requested City Planning Department to notify League of all new requests for modifications to the CRR EIR.

Farm Land Preservation

The Model Farm Land Preservation Program Committee met this month and League was represented at the meeting.

Just Say Preschool

By Francine Farber 226-5455

"Just Say Preschool" is the new slogan the County Office of Education is using to roll out its completed Master Plan for Voluntary Preschool and to mark the beginning of the implementation phase for the plan, which will extend until 2015.

Completion of the Master Plan, written by consultant Karen Hill Scott with input from interested constituents throughout the County, was celebrated at a meeting on November 18 at which seven continuing task forces were developed to begin implementing the Plan. It is anticipated that schools throughout the County with the lowest state test scores will be selected as priority areas during the beginning years of implementation.

The beginning of the Implementation Phase was noted at a press conference on November 20 at the Jefferson Preschool, part of the Jefferson Public School in Clovis. About 50 representatives of government, education and community organizations heard Larry Powell, County Superintendent of Schools, avow that in difficult economic times it was even more important to move forward with the voluntary preschool movement. "Once behind, always behind," was his rationale for providing preschool to youngsters first whose families have few or no resources with which to provide readiness experiences.

LWVF was recognized for its leadership role in getting the County behind the development of voluntary preschool for all.

CSUF Unit , continued from page 1

- Air quality issues for our valley
- Supporting the San Joaquin River Conservancy and/or other organizations working to create and preserve nature trails in the Valley
- Volunteering with area organizations for the holidays--such as community food bank, food not bombs, Tree Fresno, and the Marjaree Mason center (these were the organizations suggested by individual students)

It was decided that the students will be researching and writing an op-ed essay to send to local print media regarding the impact of the state budget crisis on the CSU system and the importance of affordable, quality higher education for the future of California and our Valley. We hope to send this off before finals week.

Education Report

By Kay Bertken 226-2720

In the recent Fresno Unified school board elections at least one incumbent has been defeated. Manual Nunes, a school Board fixture for almost 20 years, lost his seat to Larry Moore, the former head of the Fresno Teachers Association. At this time, the race between incumbent Carol Mills and Natalie Clark has not been called, though Carol Mills is leading.

On October 15 the FUSD school board agenda included a review of district academic support initiatives including: the expansion of AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), a college preparation program for previously non-college bound students; the partnership with Long Beach in mathematics instruction, language arts instruction and leadership development; and the district's own focused leadership work with its personnel.

On November 12 the Board gave the superintendent a positive recommendation and extended his contract for another year to 2011. It also approved a 4 million dollar increase in its contribution to athletic facilities upgrades at the high schools and a 3.3 million dollar funding allocation for the implementation of human resources software to manage the 11,000 paychecks the district issues per month.

Two new proposed charter schools have applied to FUSD. One would serve students in grades 9-12 in the Fresno High area and be housed at St. Therese; the other would serve students in grades K-5 in southwest Fresno. The FUSD board at a subsequent meeting, following a review of the applications, will make determinations.

Our League Education Committee met on November 19. We reviewed our participation in publicizing the Fresno Unified school board elections and determined that the attention focused on the presidential and Fresno mayoral races complicated directing attention to those races. We discussed the possibility of sponsoring candidate forums for school board candidates but thought that it might be difficult to gather citywide attendance.

We also discussed our continuing participation in two forums addressing the dropout issue. Regarding the first forum, Francine Farber, Amy Arambula and I attended a second meeting with United Way and the Center for Multi-cultural Diversity (CMD) to plan for a Community Summit on dropout prevention. Funding is through a grant to United Way from America's Promise and a modest grant to LWVF through LWVC. The CMD is planning to produce videos by students who have experiences with dropping out, telling

their own stories. The League is assigned the task of interviewing parents; United Way will talk with educators.

These preparatory interviews are currently imagined to provide various constituents with an opportunity to distill their concerns in advance of the summit. The next meeting with United Way and other partners will be held on November 24.

Regarding the second forum, Amy has been co-chairing meetings with Deputy Mayor Jeff Eban and representatives of Clovis, Central and Fresno Unified Districts, the Fresno Police Department's gang prevention unit, Parks and Recreation, the Regional Jobs Initiative, Child and Family Services and other public and nongovernmental agencies interested in finding community answers to the dropout issue. I have been attending the meetings representing the League. That group has determined to focus its attention on attendance, mentoring and the establishment of a decentralized alternative education program modeled after Sweet Water High School District in southern California. That district offers multiple storefront and mall-based centers. Each center is staffed with teachers and computers, making individualized instruction accessible to students who need to make up credits in order to get back on track in school.

The Education Committee agreed that the America's Promise summit could be organized to educate and inform a broader Fresno public about the dropout problem and engage them in developing initiatives. A community-wide mentoring program will certainly be one of the initiatives that will be promoted. Fresno Unified currently has a mentoring office that provides a central location for volunteers to be screened, trained and assigned. They also sponsor an e-mail mentoring program for volunteers who might not be able to spend time at school sites. Central Unified is interested in establishing a similar set of procedures. Any League members who might be interested in mentoring a Fresno Unified student can call the Mentoring Office at 457-3369.

NEW BOARD MEMBER

Board member Diane Woody has resigned due to family responsibilities. In her place the Board, as per our by-laws, has elected **Diane Blair** to fulfill the balance of her term, which expires in April 2010. Diane, who was the lead person in developing our new student unit at CSUF, will make that her portfolio responsibility as Board member.

VOTER SERVICES REPORT

By Liz Shields 294-5185

Elections Department

Grateful thanks to over 70 members and friends of the League who helped to process the absentee ballots and answer the phones on Election Day at the Elections Department offices on Hamilton Avenue. Without all these willing volunteers this would have been an impossible task. As well as providing a valuable service to the community our volunteers raised \$3637 for the League.

We appreciate the trust and support of Fresno County Clerk Victor Salazar and his staff, especially Kathy McClue and Andy Anderson, in asking us to participate in this public service.

Candidate Forums

Thanks to Comcast for joining with the League to present informative candidate forums to their viewers for the Superior Court judges race, for Congressional and State Assembly seats and for the three Fresno Unified School District Board races. Thanks also goes to Bill Murphy for moderating the forums so capably, and to Mary Savala, Bette Noblett and Sylvia Woodburne for being the time-keepers. Questions came from League members and a finance class at Fresno State.

Speakers Bureau

Thanks to Alice Powell, Margaret Johnson, Mary Savala and Liz Shields for making a total of 15 presentations on the ballot propositions to community groups ranging in age from high school students at C.A.R.T. to senior citizens at San Joaquin Gardens. The audiences at the presentations expressed their appreciation for the information that gave them an overview of the propositions and encouraged them to further research the issues. Alice also represented the League at the mayoral debate hosted and aired by KVPT.

Easy Voter Guides

Thanks to the League members who helped to distribute almost 5000 English language and 1000 Spanish language Easy Voter Guides to local libraries, community groups, schools and colleges.

Now we have a breather until the next set of elections in the spring!

League of Women Voters Fresno

IS ON THE WEB

<http://Fresno.ca.lwvnet.org>

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The State Budget—The Crisis You Can't Ignore

From *California Voter*

Everything we care about is undermined or made possible by the state budget. In this era of deficits, the time has come to make real changes in the budget process. Cutting spending alone is not enough; everything should be on the table, including raising revenues through tax increases and elimination of tax expenditures (deductions, credits, and the like). Our 2007 Convention resolution about eliminating the ongoing budget deficit only recognized a \$3 to 5 billion problem—it is now \$16 billion! The challenge is that these funding issues cut across all of our League Positions.



Visit our Web site www.lwv.org

for what you need to know about
this crucial issue.

We are grateful to our sponsors for their support in "Making Democracy Work."

League members who wish to be sponsors or to secure sponsorships for us, may contact Francine Farber at 226-5455

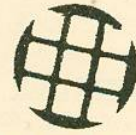
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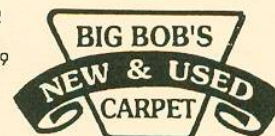
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Democracy is not a spectator sport

Address: _____

Name: _____ Ph. _____ E-mail _____

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

Yearly Dues Individual - \$60 ~ Family - \$90 (2 members, same address) ~ Student - \$30

JOIN US! Members receive newsletters from national, state and local Leagues, may access local, state and national League websites and list-serves, and may participate in League studies of issues.

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 Shery, at 243-9305**. Prospective members receive one issue of *The Fresno Voter* free.

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.

NONPARTISANSHIP: The League does not support or oppose any candidate or political party.

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

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

You're Invited
to the League's Annual Holiday Party



Hors d'oeuvres

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*Bring holiday music, instruments,
voices, jokes and good cheer*

At the gracious home of Dr. Juan and Clara Touya

2351 West Warner, Fresno

One block South of Herndon, East of Van Ness

Saturday, December 6, 5–7 p.m.

Need a ride or have questions?

Call Georgia, 439-5410