



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS FRESNO

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Phone: 559-226-VOTE

Web site:
<http://fresno.ca.lwvnet.org>

The *Fresno* **VOTER**

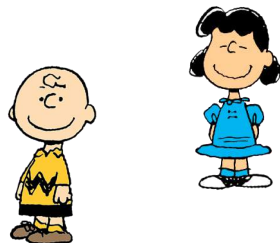


Monday, January 16
Regular Board Meeting
5 p.m.—League Office

Saturday, February 4
Program Planning
League Office
9 a.m.

Monday, March 20
Regular Board Meeting
5 p.m.—League Office

Members and their guests
are invited to all
League meetings and events



**WE WANT YOU . . .
TO COME TO
PROGRAM PLANNING**



***OUR LEAGUE NEEDS TO DECIDE
ON OUR LOCAL AND STATE
PRIORITIES FOR NEXT YEAR***

**** New Format***

****Shorter Session***



****Delicious
Breakfast***



***Saturday, February 4, * 9 a.m. * Stone Soup
See pages 2, 6, 7 to prepare for meeting***

President's Message



Each year we have a Program Planning meeting in February at which members are invited to decide what our local priorities should be for the year.

In the past, our members would first think about these issues at the Program Planning meeting. Instead, this year we are presenting you with a slate of six local issues prior to the meeting so you can think about them beforehand. You will be happy to hear that this will tighten up our meeting and make it more “member friendly” and efficient.

At the Program Planning meeting, the membership will choose three issues to be priorities for 2017. The League will focus special attention on those issues during 2017 using a variety of strategies (such as Lunch & Learns) to educate and advocate for them with our members and the public. Of course, we will continue to advocate for all of the issues in which we are now engaged.

If you would like to add an issue to the slate provided by the Board, **you will need to contact either Nyla Zender at nylazj@ckomncast.net or Francine Farber at fmfarber@hotmail.com prior to January 16.**

Our League has formally studied several local issues. As a result, we have well-established “positions” with respect to local government, education, housing, justice, land use planning and transportation. You may wish to review those positions prior to the meeting. The positions are printed in our Handbook, which is available on our website at www.fresno.ca.lwvnet.org under “ABOUT LWV.”

Please think about the slate of issues and come prepared to discuss your choices at the Program Planning meeting. Thank you for your interest and support.

PLEASE SEE PRIORITIES FOR LOCAL & STATE GOALS ON PAGES 6-7

NYLA

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

Mailing Address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710

Volume 76, No. 1 Editor: Francine Farber

Member News

Please Note Changes in Your Roster



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Thank You!

Education

by Kay Bertken



The year has ended for Fresno Unified, and what a year it has been! Test scores are up across the board, the new facilities bond Measure X passed with 66% approval, and Superintendent Hanson has announced that he will be leaving the district in August after nearly 12 years in the position. Two new board members have been sworn in; and the new board majority, which includes the new trustees, has elected Brooke Ashjian to be board president.

While there has been some speculation in the news that Hanson is leaving because of the lease-leaseback investigations, there is no assurance that those will ever be decisively concluded. It has been nearly a year and a half since District records and emails were subpoenaed, and still no District personnel have been contacted. It is more likely that Supt. Hanson is leaving because he no longer can count on a board majority to support his initiatives. The superintendent has been a lightning rod for controversy for some years, perhaps because he has led the district for as long as he has. Superintendents do not usually stay around long. The average tenure for Superintendents in the United States in 2014 was 3.18 years—up from 2.8 years in 2003.

Hanson is certainly the longest serving superintendent in Fresno in recent memory, and he has made some vocal enemies, including two members of his own board and the Fresno Bee. On the other hand, he also has made a great many friends. At the last board meeting of the year and the first following his announced departure, the board room was packed with school principals who had come to thank him and praise his leadership. A number of Hmong community members also spoke in tribute, thanking him for making them feel welcome in the schools.

In the meantime and presumably till August, the work of the district will continue. Contract negotiations with the district's labor partners are currently underway. Negotiations with the Teachers Association have been particularly contentious since the FTA showed up at a November meeting with 300 members and proposed a bargaining team of more than 700 in the name of "transparency." It revised that downward to 300 that would view the negotiations through live streaming. It is an

unusual request. Bargaining sessions are ordinarily limited to a small team directly charged with the negotiation role. It is generally assumed that partisan audiences motivate more rigid positions and limit the possibility of compromise.

Without withdrawing its demand for enhanced participation, FTA pared its representatives down to a 12 member team at the November meeting, and proposals were exchanged. The District is offering a combination of wage, pension and health care contributions that total to a 5% increase. **The FTA is proposing an ongoing salary increase of 20% over the next three years—an increase of \$110 million a year—plus \$60 million in ongoing contributions for fully subsidized health insurance.**

In addition to the challenges of the collective bargaining season, the superintendent has announced plans with the County Office of Education to develop a downtown education site that will house career-technical education and potentially other alternative high school programs. **He is also in negotiation with City College for a permanent home on that campus for Design Science High School, the small but very successful FUSD high school that graduates students with a combination high school diploma and AA degree.**

Student Unit

by Lisa Bryant



The Fresno State Student Unit was very active in the month leading up to the election. The group held two voter registration drives on campus prior to the October 23 deadline. On the final day of voter registration, we registered more voters than at several of our previous drives combined. The Student Unit then turned its focus to getting out the vote. We joined forces with the Fresno State student government and other student organizations to host a Get Out the Vote Fair on campus, where t-shirts were handed out, reminding students to "Go Vote!" In addition, members tabled at several on-campus events talking to students about propositions on the ballot. The Voters Edge bookmarks were so popular that we ran out of them.

This holiday season the Student Unit once again collected toys for the Ronald McDonald House at Valley Children's Hospital. Toys were collected from LWVF Women members at the holiday party as well as from students on campus.

Transportation

by Stephenie Frederick

All around the world, cities are growing overcrowded as rural areas empty out. Cities are becoming so overcrowded that traveling within them is becoming a nightmare. We see the crush even here in Fresno, a city that leads the pack of mid-sized cities in lane miles per resident. Negotiating Herndon Avenue at State Highway 41 is no fun.

The standard ways of moving people around in crowded cities aren't working well anymore. Cars are clogging the city arteries and taking up huge amounts of parking. Standard forms of public transit – buses, trams, trains – could transport more people, but there's a problem: they can't pick up people in front of their homes and they can't deliver them to the doors of their destinations. This inadequacy is called the "first mile-last mile" problem of standard public transit. Because of this problem, many people who would otherwise forsake their drive-alone cars and ride buses, trams, and trains . . . don't.

Instead of trying to solve the transport problem by focusing on cars, buses, trams, and trains, suppose we redefine public transit as "anything that makes it unnecessary for a person to operate a vehicle as sole occupant of that vehicle." Suddenly we are in a different realm. For example, we can (and people do) redefine commuter carpooling and recast it as "ride splitting." Person A starts out driving his car, picks up Person B and then Person C, then is dropped off at his destination, while Person B and C continue, pick up D, who drops off B, and then C. Person D drives to her destination and parks the car (which you will recall belongs to Person A).

If Person A rents the car for an hour from a car-share rental agency, Person D can return the car near or at her destination. It is then available for use by others. Four people rent one car each way, split the cost of two hours' rental . . . and perhaps find that they do not need to own cars of their own. At the very least they do not have to hassle the parking problem.

Ride-splitting, which overcomes the single-destination problem of carpooling, and short-term car rentals are just two of the new concepts that are revolutionizing transportation in the large cities of the world. Short-term bicycle rentals – pick up here, drop off over there -- are another. Microtransit circulators (shuttles – perhaps autonomous) that connect neighborhoods with main lines like bus rapid transit or light rail are still another.

We already have on-demand Uber and Lyft, which replace expensive taxis and are working closely with transit companies to complement (connect with) standard transit services. **And why not install wide sidewalks to accommodate scooters, motorized wheelchairs, and hoverboards? Anything to get cars off the street, right?**

Add in lanes for bicycles and tok-toks (pedi cabs)– and you've got some urban excitement going! Personal rapid transit (little cars in branching guideways) and moving sidewalks (familiar in airports) also offer lots of potential.

Don't overlook delivery drones. Drone delivery means many fewer vans on the streets (and ordering from Amazon already means that customers do not have to use their cars to drive to stores). If we think of drones as part of public transit and design our urban areas with them in mind we will be on our way to easing transportation difficulty within the city.

Mag-lev elevators that contain several cars to a shaft – cars that can split off sideways into horizontal shafts – are already in operation in huge hotels and other buildings around the world. **We haven't begun to explore their potential for moving pedestrians safely in, say, a city's downtown or in a special district like The Tower.**

To facilitate the transportation of people within dense urban areas, we will need different kinds of street design; urban buildings that combine retail, commerce, and residential uses; and different kinds of centers – lively plazas -- where people can carry out all kinds of work and errands on foot. Urban re-design and exciting transportation diversification will go hand in hand to create the habitable city.



Housing

by Patience Milrod

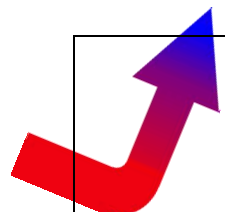


The new year brings some progress on housing issues. Education Director Kay Bertken will urge Fresno Unified School District support for a City rental inspection program at the board's first meeting this month. The Fresno families who need safe and healthy housing thank her!



As we've noted in past columns, Fresno's inadequate supply of affordable homes has terrible consequences: where the market offers scant choices at affordable prices, even slums are overpriced. Fresno's Habitat for Humanity affiliate is exploring a new-to-Fresno model to help solve that problem: a Community Land Trust (CLT). With a CLT, a non-profit entity builds or rehabilitates affordable homes. The new homeowner owns the building, and takes a 99-year lease on the land. Because the non-profit continues to own the land, the land cost drops out of the purchase price, ensuring affordability to each successive family to own the home. This model preserves the value of the subsidy for future generations, and protects against gentrification and displacement that result from rising property values in a neighborhood. We're glad to see this innovative approach to this persistent problem.

Before outgoing Mayor Ashley Swearingin left office, she introduced a draft rental housing inspection ordinance at 2016's penultimate City Council meeting. Dozens of residents spoke in graphic detail about the nightmarish conditions and economic consequences of the City's failure to conduct



Health Care

by Richard Bertken, M.D.



We should expect gradual deconstruction of Obamacare following the installation of our new President and Congress. This will take time. The Affordable Care Act was carefully negotiated with all the stakeholders. America's Health Plans, the American Medical Association, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, the American Association of Hospitals, and the AARP all weighed in and provided support for ACA. It will prove very challenging to provide the expanded and improved coverage offered by the ACA in some other format.

The takedown of the ACA will have the greatest impact on states, such as California, that welcomed Medicaid expansion and vigorously implemented insurance exchanges. However, our local efforts to sustain the broad increase in insurance coverage sponsored by the ACA continue unabated. Healthy Communities Access Partners (HCAP), a consortium of health care providers, public health officials, and social and religious interest groups, continues to meet regularly to confront the problem of our county's remaining uninsured.

Two encouraging accomplishments of our county's implementation of expanded coverage will persist regardless of the fate of Obamacare: the enrollment of children in Medi-Cal and the enrollment of thousands of families and adults who were eligible for Medi-Cal coverage *before* the ACA expansion of Medicaid. These latter enrollees have been dubbed the "out of the woodwork" class of new beneficiaries by news media, and account for a major component of the newly insured people across the country.

"I am an optimist," said Norma Forbes, the Executive Director of Fresno HCAP. "We are going to continue enrolling county residents. The pathway to universal health care has been up and down, and the downs have often provided us with time for introspection that resulted in new approaches."

systematic code inspections. Residents demanded timely action, and a provision requiring initial inspection of all rental properties in the City as a baseline for further enforcement efforts. The Council deferred action on the issue until February 2, with Mayor-elect **Lee Brand** committing to introduce an amended ordinance that includes the baseline inspection requirement. Look for updates in this space.

PREPARING FOR PROGRAM PLANNING ON FEBRUARY 14

LOCAL PRIORITIES

At the meeting you will be asked to vote for 3 of the following issues by circling their numbers 1 through 6

(1) CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Advocate for greater civic engagement among Fresno's diverse populations, including "get out the vote" efforts.

- ◆ Attend Civic Education Partnership meetings and lobby for improved civics education in classrooms.
- ◆ Conduct forums and write opinion pieces related to informed citizenship in all League areas.
- ◆ Develop a Voter Services Team that is available and trained for elections work and community presentations with information provided in various languages.
- ◆ Conduct regular LWVF Voter Services presentations or events.

(2) EDUCATION

Advocate for equality of opportunity in education

- ◆ Support efforts to improve school readiness for children under 5 years of age.
- ◆ Support struggling student populations by monitoring progress toward equal educational opportunities (i.e. preschool-age students, English language learners and those in alternative education programs).
- ◆ Engage with school districts in their efforts to broaden their career-technical education programs.

(3) HOUSING

Advocate for quality affordable housing

- ◆ Recommend inclusionary housing as a condition of approval for all new residential developments.
- ◆ Support systematic rental housing inspection programs that include a baseline inspection of all rental units older than 5 years.

(4) LAND USE PLANNING

Advocate for full Implementation of the Fresno County General Plan, including the update of unincorporated community and regional plans.

- ◆ Encourage adoption of an indicators program, a citizens oversight committee and the preparation of comprehensive annual program reports.
- ◆ Encourage public engagement in the proposed 2017 revision of the General Plan Background Report and Policy Document, which should entail the adoption of a new climate action plan.

(5) TRANSPORTATION

Advocate for improved public transportation in Fresno County, including all strategies that reduce single-driver auto travel

- ◆ Continue to represent the League on the Measure C Citizen Oversight Committee and the Fresno Council of Governments Transportation Technical Committee.
- ◆ Educate League members and county residents about the latest innovations in public transportation.

(6) WATER SUPPLY

Advocate for management practices that ensure a sustainable water supply

- ◆ Support efforts to ensure an adequate supply of quality groundwater and surface water in Fresno County.
- ◆ Keep abreast of the implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act as applied to the Kings River Basin, which includes the formation of groundwater agencies and the adoption of regional strategies to ensure a sustainable water supply.

PREPARING FOR OUR ANNUAL PROGRAM PLANNING MEETING STATE PRIORITIES

Each year at our Program Planning meeting we recommend issues for emphasis at the state level. This year, the state League is also posing several questions about the League's study process and the manner in which League positions are applied. Below are questions from the state League.

A. ISSUES FOR EMPHASIS

In addition to the state League's Campaign for Making Democracy Work, are there issues on which you think the LWVC should concentrate?

List up to three choices. *One or more of choices could be a new or update study. Be specific in your recommendations; state both the issue you want the state League to focus on and what you want us to do.*

*Who in your League would be willing to work on a statewide committee on that issue? We ask for names because we are a grassroots organization. There is no group of other people out there willing to work on issues that you suggest. **The state League is all of us, and the way things get done at the state level is by volunteers from local Leagues working together.***

First Choice: _____

Second Choice: _____

Third Choice: _____

B. THE LEAGUE STUDY PROCESS

What changes, if any, would you suggest making to the League study process?

C. APPLYING LEAGUE POSITIONS

1. *Should we continue to rely on specifics of each position, and require update studies to change the details? The alternative is to give the statements of principle more weighty than the details of the position. Yes _____ No _____*

2. *Should there be a distinction between issues that previous studies did not cover, and issues that were studied but on which no consensus was reached? Yes _____ No _____*


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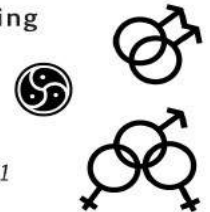
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What do you get when you join the League? All for one fee, you become a member of the Fresno, California and national Leagues and receive their newsletters. You may participate in League studies of issues; receive leadership training; hone your public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

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