



The Fresno VOTER

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Calendar

Tuesday, January 19
Regular Board Meeting
5 p.m., League Office

Wednesday, January 27
Lunch & Learn, Noon
Speaker: John Dugan, new Director of Planning, City of Fresno
"Revitalization of Downtown"

Saturday, February 6
Annual Program Planning
9 a.m.—Breakfast will be served
Stone Soup Community Room

Tuesday, February 16
Regular Board Meeting
5 p.m., League Office

SAVE THE DATE
April 17, Annual Meeting
Guest Speaker Eddie Aubrey
Independent Police Auditor

FUSD facilities improve; academics continue to present challenges

by Kay Bertken

There is always something to report about education in Fresno. Remarkable improvements in athletic facilities are evident. Fresno High, McLane and Hoover all have new all-



weather tracks replacing the rutted dirt tracks that have served and scarred those campuses. The old track at Fresno High, which was put in by some parent boosters decades ago, did not even measure the appropriate quarter mile distance. The beautiful new track there is accompanied by new baseball and softball fields.

Fresno High never had a softball field. The girls practiced and played at Hamilton. A new enlarged pool will open at Fresno High in the spring. The environmental impact report required for Bullard's improvements has been circulated, and work may begin on a new track and pool on that campus in the spring.

Possible bond measure

The Board of Trustees of Fresno Unified has begun exploring financing options for the other major improvements

Fresno schools envisioned in the District's Facilities Master Plan. They have begun planning for a possible bond measure on the November 2010 ballot. While this may not seem the best economic climate for proposing bonds, the district has the unique opportunity to fund major capital improvements without raising the currently authorized tax assessment. A new bond passed in 2010 would replace an old one that will be expiring.

FUSD weathers cuts

In its most recent interim budget report, FUSD proved itself able to meet its financial obligations in spite of weathering major cuts from the State. For the years 08-09 and 09-10, California reduced FUSD revenues by \$90 million. If the state makes further cuts to education to reduce its projected \$21 billion deficit, Fresno Unified's share of the new deficit would be an additional \$ 83million revenue loss.

Fresno Unified was invited this year to join 17 other urban districts in the Trial Urban District Assessment of the National Assessment of Educational Progress(NAEP). The NAEP assesses random samples of students across the country in reading, science and math. It is the

(Continued on page 3)

President's Message



It was a pleasure to attend our annual Holiday Party on December 6. Recovering from knee replacement surgery, I hobbled into the Touya's beautiful home to find the dining room table set gloriously with two elegant silver tea services. Despite the cold rain, over 30 members and friends ventured out to enjoy the camaraderie and delicious tea party fare. Our thanks go not only to the Touya's for their repeated hospitality to us for special events, but also to organizer Georgia Sisson and those who provided the wonderful goodies.



In December our League was pleased to award four more mini-grants of \$500 each to area teachers who submitted proposals to enhance the teaching of the Constitution. These funds are available through a memorial gift from member Bette Peterson. Three of the teachers are from Roosevelt High in Fresno Unified. Craig Cleveland's project stresses the importance of individual participation to maintain democracy and American values. Derek Boucher plans to show his students how the Constitution is applied locally at a Fresno city council meeting. Miguel Gomez plans to use the web to engage student interest and enhance knowledge of the Constitution. From the Alice Worsley Court School run by the Fresno County Office of Education, the team of teacher Bill Feaver and librarian Michelle Trevino will teach students about freedom and censorship through studying banned books.

In May League members, teachers, colleagues and students will display the results of their projects at a Mini-Grant Expo at Roosevelt High.

The mini-grant project is a successful collaboration of the League with partners Jim Lloyd, History and Social Science Coordinator of the Fresno Unified School District, and Lisa Benham, History and Social Science Coordinator of the Fresno County Office of Education. The LWVF committee includes Jane Worsley, Liz Shields and the support of Judge Hilary Chittick of Superior Court.

Good News!

Get ready for an outstanding Annual Meeting in April. Eddie Aubrey, our new independent police auditor, has graciously consented to be our luncheon speaker.

You will not want to miss his discussion about his first three months in this groundbreaking office.

Details of the event will be announced next month in the Voter. Our business meeting will be followed by an affordable luncheon.

Members and friends invited!

Want the secret to recruiting new members?

ASK THEM TO JOIN!

Francine

Education

Continued from page 1



nationally representative assessment of student achievement. FUSD was anxious to benefit from the comparative information provided by these tests and to track its students against standards not emphasized in California.

Fresno scores similar to big cities

The math results came out in December. The large 18 city average was below the national average for both grades. Fresno achievement scores were statistically indistinguishable from Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Milwaukee and Washington, D.C., somewhat below the large city average for fourth graders. In grade 8, Fresno's scores were below the large city average and were not statistically different from Baltimore, Los Angeles, Atlanta and Cleveland.

For those of us who have lived in Fresno our whole lives, it is hard to think about our town and its schools in that big city company; but we are not a small rural community any more. Fresno schools share the challenges of these other large, diverse and high poverty urban areas.

The District is funding a couple of new initiatives to engage parents in their children's education, particularly to broaden access and participation of students in higher level courses. Encouraging and training parents to be advocates for their children has been identified as a means of keeping kids in school and was one of the proposals at Fresno's Dropout Summit in October. Several League members participated in that summit and are waiting to see the community action plan that was to have been submitted to America's Promise, the Summit sponsor, in December.



17-Year-Olds Can Register to Vote

An important voting rights bill was signed into law by Governor Schwarzenegger in October. AB 30 permits 17-year-olds who meet the voter eligibility requirements to submit voter registration affidavits. There is no longer a requirement that they turn 18 before the next election in order to register to vote. The registrant must still be 18 on or before the election in order to vote, but now anyone who is 17 has the right to register.

AB 30 was strongly supported by the League because it will encourage registration and voting by young people. It capitalizes on the timing of high school government classes and will encourage high school voter registration drives.

If a student registers to vote at 17, and then changes his/her address (collegebound, etc.), it is still necessary to apply for a mail-in ballot or to re-register in the county/state of new residence.

Online Voter Registration

The State Voter Registration form is no longer posted on the Secretary of State's website, www.sos.ca.gov. In the past, you could fill out the form online and have the Secretary of State send you the form to be signed and mailed. This program was discontinued in 2009. Current state law and regulations prevent a state or local election official from accepting a state voter registration form printed from a website. Therefore the Secretary of State no longer makes the state form available on the Internet and discourages others from making it available on their websites.

The Secretary of State's website now allows voters to fill out the National Mail Voter Registration form, but the registrant must print the form, sign it, and then send it to his or her county election office.

For voter registration drives, the best practice is to use the postage-free, preaddressed printed California voter registration forms available from your county election office or at post offices, libraries, and other locations.

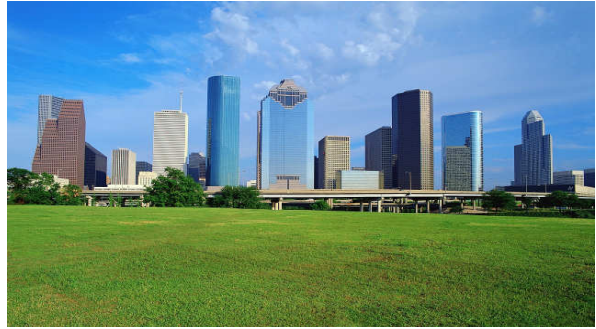
Confusion may also arise because the National Mail Voter Registration form found on the Secretary of State's website does not ask registrants where they were born.

The federal National Voting Rights Act (NVRA) requires state and local election officials to accept the national form, even though under California law a registrant is required to provide his/her state of birth or country of birth if outside the U.S. This is another reason to use the California voter registration forms when registering voters!

(reprinted from LWVC electronic newsletter)

*Lunch & Learn
with League*

Wednesday, January 27
Noon
Community Room at Stone Soup



John Dugan
Director of Planning and Development, City of Fresno
“Revitalizing Downtown”
Bring a sandwich; we'll supply beverage and snacks



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Natural Resources

by Mary Savala



Jessie Morrow Mountain

The League Board has decided that League will take no position on this project, but that League would respond to the Draft Environmental Impact Report. Those comments were due December 4. Radley Reep stepped up to the plate and took the lead in reading



and analyzing over 650 pages of the report. Twenty pages of comment were submitted on time under League's name. The analysis was focused on the project proponents' claims for the need for mineral resources from this site, the goals of the project, and the alternatives for mitigating environmental impacts. Next step in this process will be the County Planning Commission's hearing on the DEIR and on the application for a conditional use permit. No date is set yet; the proponents might re-submit an amended DEIR which would begin a new public comment process.

City of Fresno Green Development Code, General Plan Update, and Master EIR Update

In May of 2009 the Fresno City council approved the Sustainable Fresno initiative as part of the US Department of Energy grant, creating the Environmental and Renewable Resource Center within the Planning and Development Department and approving the formal outline of diverse and far-reaching sustainable Fresno activities. As a part of the Sustainable Fresno initiative, the City committed to a comprehensive efficiency and conservation-oriented reorganization and rewrite of its current plans, land use policies, and property development regulations.

An extensive public outreach effort is already underway to engage a broad spectrum of stakeholders in the effort. The work plan was presented to a special session of the Fresno City Planning Commission on December 9. More than 25 speakers including representatives from the California Public Utilities Commission, CSUF, professional architectural associations, former planning commissioners, and Housing and Urban

Development enthusiastically supported the project. Only the Building Industry Association spoke of caution and concern for changing the General Plan and the Development regulations.

League representatives have been attending the workshops on the project presented to stakeholders and agency staffs by a team of Fresno City planners, and League also expressed its support for this effort.

The presentation was very well received by the chair of the commission and two of its members, although the other two commissioners present were conspicuously quiet. The presentation will go to the City Council on January 14.

Measure C Oversight Committee

The Measure C Oversight Committee has been meeting monthly to review and comment on the expenditure reports for the last fiscal year, July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009, and to review and comment on the planned expenditure reports for the next fiscal year. Measure C Extension has a variety of new programs and new conditions for receiving funding which are different from the requirements for

(Continued on page 6)

Voter Services

by Liz Shields

The League has been asked to participate in a project being set up LWVUS to determine the most effective method for conducting voter registration in high schools. Two methods will be tested – classroom settings and assemblies. A sub goal of the project is to help the League understand what needs to be done so that schools can implement these types of programs on their own. The end product of the project will be a best practices guide for all Leagues to utilize when implementing a high school voter registration drive.



Two hundred schools across the country will be chosen and randomly assigned to one of

the two test groups or to a control group. Thirty high schools in Fresno County with significant populations of students of color who will be turning 18 by the 2010 general election were identified as potential participants. We are currently contacting faculty and staff at these schools to see if they are willing to take part in the project. So far two schools have responded positively and two have declined. We expect to hear from more after winter break. Between April and June local League members will carry out the test in the selected schools.

This will be a busy Spring for us in Fresno with all the usual pre-election activities such as candidate forums, proposition presentations, and distribution of Easy Voter Guides prior to the June 8 Primary, as well as any testing at selected schools. After the New Year we will be recruiting volunteers to help with voter education.

Natural Resources *(continued from page 5)*

the last Measure C.

The Committee also received a report on amending the Expenditure Plan for Measure C Extension to use funding now being collected from sales tax revenues for Rail Consolidation and Advanced Technology for securing a High Speed Rail Maintenance Station in Fresno.

Measure C Extension provides an amendment process whereby the Fresno County Transportation Authority and the Fresno County Council of Governments (COG) must act to approve any changes in

the expenditure plan. A task force has been set up and a consultant hired by COG and the City of Fresno to plan how funding will be used to persuade the High Speed Rail Commission that the maintenance yard should be located in Fresno. The proponents of using Rail Consolidation and Advanced Funding are many and energetic, so it is likely the amendment will pass. COG has said it will be holding public hearings on the issue as required in the Measure C legislation. The majority of the Oversight Committee appears in favor of amending the Expenditure Plan.



The Oversight Committee also heard and rejected a request from Clovis to use bicycle facility funding to re-stripe bike lanes. The funding for bike and pedestrian trails and facilities specifically requires the money to be used for new facilities only. The Oversight Committee agreed 5 to 3 that no exceptions should be made to the requirement.

A Grizzlie Task

Councilman Lee Brand asked the League to comment on the deal points for a new lease agreement with the Fresno Grizzlies baseball team. Reassuring to members who read the points of the proposal and the attending information was the application of the City's new Better Business Act provisions to the negotiations for a new lease agreement for the baseball stadium. The new legislation called for the Grizzlies' management to provide more extensive and detailed information about the fiscal stability of the team and its management. A consultant hired by the City, but paid for by the Grizzlies under the provisions of the Better Business Act, provided the City with expertise about the business of baseball and reasonable expectations for management practices and profits.



The League spoke at the Council meeting approving the new contract, not endorsing the contact, but endorsing the new process which provided the Council with the information needed to make a reasoned decision.

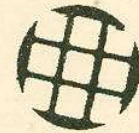
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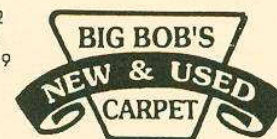
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Democracy is not a spectator sport

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 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, Dolores O’Neal at 435-1185**. Prospective members receive one issue of *The Fresno Voter* free.

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.

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

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