




Phone: 559-226-VOTE

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

The *Fresno* **VOTER**



Friday, July 31
(note date change)
Annual Retreat
Home of Francine Farber
707 West Fairmont, Fresno

Tuesday, August 18
Ice Cream Social, 7 p.m.
Home of Jacquie Canfield
3597 W. Loma Linda
Fresno

Tuesday, August 25
Regular Board Meeting
5 pm., League Office

Monday, September 21
(note date change)
Regular Board Meeting
5 p.m., League Office

We want you!!!!

We need you!!!!

Please help us with voter registration. You can volunteer for one day, one week, or permanently.



**REGISTER
TO VOTE!**



Your League is planning voter outreach through high schools, colleges, and minority groups including Latinos, Hmong, Native Americans and African-Americans.



In order to do this we need person-power. Training and a partner available.

To volunteer or for more information call Marianne Kast, our new Voter Services Manager, at 270-7937 or fourkasts@gmail.com

This is an all-electronic issue of the Voter. You will not be receiving a copy of the July Voter in the mail. Regular mailing will be resumed for the August Voter. We are conserving resources!

President's Message



Voting and Voter Services are synonymous with the League of Women Voters. For several years the LWVUS has been battling in the courts to overturn laws passed by several states that make voting more difficult for minorities and others who live in poverty.

Fortunately, California is not one of the states that passed restrictions to voter registration and access to polling places. However, we have voting problems of our own. One of the LWVC Convention speakers, Dr. Lisa Bedolla, a professor at UC Berkeley, has conducted research focusing on "how marginalization and inequality structure the political opportunities available to members of ethno-racial groups." She shared some very revealing information on California demographics now and projecting into the future.

Her data covered several groups, but I will focus on Latinos because they represent by far the largest group. **The Latino population in 2013 was 39% of the total population of CA and was projected to be 41% by 2020 and 47% by 2050.** The growth rate of Latinos during that time span (60%) is about double the growth rate of the general population (32%).

In terms of voting data accumulated in 2012, **among the Latino population 17% were considered to be likely voters, and unregistered adults were recorded at 60%.**

These statistics are of great concern for our state. They indicate that Leagues all over California need to figure out how to reach out to the Latino population and others as well, such as the Hmong community here in Fresno. Our Voter Services Committee is working hard to register new voters, concentrating recently on high school seniors in many schools in our area. If we wish to join the effort to register groups such as Latinos or Hmong and encourage them to go to the polls, we are going to need more people to join in this noble effort. It is one of the most important things we can do at this time.

Hope to see you soon at a Voter Service Committee meeting!

Nyla

The VOTER is a monthly publication of the League of Women Voters of Fresno
Mailing Address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710
Volume 74, No. 7 Editor: Francine Farber

Member News

Please note changes in your roster

The Roster for 2015-16 was e-mailed to you in June. If you did not receive it, please call 226-8683 and let us know.

Correction

Marianne Kast

Cell phone 270-7937

New Address

Lisa Bryant

1664 East Nees

Fresno, CA 03720

Bernice Shields

2444 Beverly

Clovis, CA 93611

We are now a 501 (c) (3) so all dues and donations are tax deductible and also much appreciated. Make checks out to LWVF and send to

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1345 Bulldog Lane

Fresno, CA 93710

Get Ready!!!

We're planning LWVF's 75th anniversary gala

April, 2016

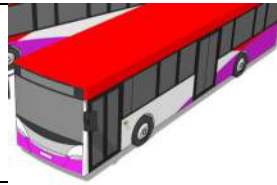
Want to help?

Have some suggestions?

Call Francine

Transportation

by Stephenie Frederick



Included in the June Voter article on transportation was a list of the improvements that FAX would like to make – for example, extension of evening, night, and weekend bus service. In this article is a quick overview of FAX's financial situation that makes it clear why FAX will not be improving its basic bus service any time soon.

FAX has two categories of expenditures, operating and capital. On the capital side, FAX is planning several important projects in its 2016-2020 capital improvement program (total budget \$189.2 million). Among them:

- ◆ Install the BRT system
- ◆ Purchase new, large, heavy-duty buses to replace old buses
- ◆ Remodel the Manchester Center
- ◆ Improve bus stops and other amenities
- ◆ Carry out planning functions that are directly connected to capital investments

FAX's capital improvements funding will come from federal, state and local Measure C sources.

Operating costs include wages, benefits, consultant fees, supplies, services, and other non-tangible items. Over the FY2016-2020 time period, total operating expenditures are expected to increase from \$49.4 million in FY2016 to \$60.3 million in

FY2020. These funds come from federal, state, and local Measure C sources as well as fares and advertising.

If FAX receives the capital and operating funds on which it based its five-year plan, it will have enough money to make the capital investments listed above and continue its present level of service, with perhaps some slight increases in bus frequency on two or three lines. But the an extension of the big federal transportation bill that has provided nationwide capital and operating funds will expire at the end of this month and Congress has yet to agree on how much funding to approve in any further extensions of the bill.

With federal funding for existing service in doubt, it is difficult for FAX to plan for improvements. In addition, the cost of paratransit service for elderly and disabled residents has been rising steadily, diverting funds from regular bus service. Finally, the Bus Rapid Transit system will soon be installed; funding for its operation three or four years from now has not been determined.

Leaving aside for a moment the federal funding crisis, where could FAX obtain the additional funding needed to maintain current service and operate the BRT?

Currently FAX receives no money from the City of Fresno's general fund; if the city's finances continued to improve, perhaps some amount

could be diverted to FAX from the general fund. Measure C provides the City of Fresno with annual flexible funding that to date has always been used for street maintenance, but could possibly provide some transit funding in the future.

FAX could wring a few dollars out of cost reduction and fare increases, but these efforts would not amount to much either.

FAX's Short Term Transportation Plan contains a list of fourteen potential new revenue sources. Two of them would ensure high revenue stability and would be easy to administer and collect: (1) a tax on utility services; and (2) a flat tax on real estate parcels. An increase in the Measure C sales tax (now one-half cent per dollar) would be easy to administer and collect, but would offer only moderate income stability because of fluctuations in the economy. Any of the three would require approval by two thirds of the electorate – a big political barrier.

As stated in its five-year plan, FAX "faces the challenge faced by transit agencies across the nation, namely operating and maintaining *current service levels*. Given the current fiscal realities, new funding sources and innovative service delivery options are needed in the next few years."

When the BRT begins running, FAX will restructure its standard bus routes to be more useful and efficient. That is about all we can expect at this time, unless political will at national, state, and local levels makes new funding sources available.

Education

by Kay Bertken



The Board of Trustees adopted the 2015-2016 budget and the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), the state mandated report of additional funding coming to the district to meet the needs of identified at-risk populations and the desires of the community. The Governor's revised state budget has resulted in an additional \$35 million in ongoing funds and \$28 million in one-time funds coming to Fresno. The ongoing funds will be concentrated on school supports including instructional coaches and lead teachers, counselors, reading and math intervention teachers, credit recovery programs, plus a major allocation for career-technical education.

The district has also said that some of the new money will be used to support increased salaries and benefits for teachers. The one-time funds will be used for technology upgrades, an English Learner textbook adoption, science materials and water conservation projects.

Community feedback for Fresno's LCAP supported more time for instruction, help for struggling students, more money for school sites, funding for student activities, and higher quality curriculum and instruction

Lease-leaseback controversy

The contract with Harris Construction for the building of Gaston Middle School has received a good deal of publicity following an appeal court decision overturning a lower court ruling that supported the contract. The appeal decision enumerated features of the contract that the court found inconsistent with the education code lease-leaseback provisions. As far as I can tell at this time, the District was following the advice of attorneys supporting building projects in districts around the state and a long history of lease-leaseback contracting.

The appellate decision has been appealed to the State Supreme Court. If it is upheld, Fresno and other districts around the state will be redoing contracts to comply with the newly defined requirements.

Complicating features of the Gaston case involve a preconstruction contract with Harris and the fact that Harris Construction has been awarded a number of big contracts under the Measure Q bond measure. Preconstruction agreements with lease-leaseback contractors have been supported by the California Coalition for Adequate School Housing—a major advisor for building projects in school districts. These preconstruction arrangements allow the contractor to participate in the design phases of the project and build in construction efficiencies. Trustees Ashjian, Chavez and Mills are calling for an outside investigation of lease-lease-back practices.

Using school grounds as parks

A recent editorial in the Fresno Bee advocated opening school grounds for use as recreational space for our park-deprived neighborhoods. Some efforts have been made to open schools to neighborhood use over the years. It is such an obvious and good idea until experience reveals some problems.

Restrooms are a source of much of the difficulty. Without restrooms available for public use, the school janitors had to clean up urine and feces in the hallways of the school. Opening the school bathrooms leads to other issues--who cleans them and who monitors them. The logical option is having the city provide and maintain porta-potties, but even that introduces problems when schools are in session and those porta-potties are accessible to students.

Determination of responsibility for repairs to damaged facilities is another complication. Opening the playgrounds also means providing access to all the school facilities which are laid out in ways that make them difficult to patrol.

A proposal for sex education was discussed at the June 17 meeting. The proposal responds to public requests and anticipates new state legislation. In recognition of the very high rates of teen pregnancy and STD's in our area, the proposal adds new lessons to the sex ed biology curriculum, which is currently focused on HIV/Aids prevention.

The Civic Learning Partnership is developing a resolution in support of enhanced education for citizenship that we might promote for passage by school boards in the county. The intent of the resolution is to raise awareness of the importance of citizenship training as a goal equal to the academic ambitions of a public education.

Natural Resources

by Mary Savala



I don't ordinarily report on land use news in VOTER articles that has already been reported in the press, but the Fresno Bee's article was so scornful of the public's role in shaping the city's new General Plan and the city's budget for 2015-2016 I am compelled to tell a different story. The June 16 article focused on the defeat of a motion to spend \$1 million dollars more for parks maintenance and recreational programs instead of the significant change in the city's allocation of resources and focus of attention on previously marginalized neighborhoods.

Building Healthy Communities has spent more than 5 careful years ascertaining what southeast and southwest Fresno neighborhoods wanted their city to do for them, and then showing those community members how to participate in their government to make sure their needs and concerns were addressed. The result is a city general plan update that confines its growth in the immediate future to its existing boundaries and directs resources to existing neighborhoods. BHC and others convinced

northern city residents, planning staff, city administration and most of the city council members that smarter growth and attention to our inner city community made good economic sense as well as creating a healthy quality of life for all residents of Fresno.

The mayor's budget for parks and recreation contains a big, new allocation of funding for new parks and operations and maintenance of parks. The city council itself, after finding over \$4 million more coming from the state to Fresno as reimbursement for state mandated expenses, has proposed an additional \$450,000 to develop a Master Parks Plan for the city and \$100,000 to study industrial zoning changes in Fresno. Councilwoman Soria's motion to add \$1 million more to parks maintenance and programs went down, but it was a small defeat in light of all the progress made by public participation in city planning. Proof positive for the power of the people!

No one really believes that the new direction for Fresno's growth would have occurred without the careful, responsible articulation by a newly educated and passionate public voice from those most seriously affected by past neglect.

Water News

by Diane Merrill



League members have attended a number of meetings regarding implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Four out of the five groundwater basins in Fresno County are considered critically over-drafted. What this means is that Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) covering all of these over-drafted basins must be formed by June 30, 2017 and produce Groundwater Management Plans by January 31, 2020 to achieve sustainability by 2040.

Formation of GSAs is an important

and formidable task as numerous water districts, special districts, cities and counties will be involved in the process. In the Kings Basin, only one of these five groundwater basins, there are 40 to 50 local agencies with responsibility for water and/or land use planning. Some of these basins extend into neighboring counties and will require coordination among them.

Fresno County has formed a SGMA Working Group, led by Supervisors Mendes and Pacheco, to explore ways to form GSAs for each of the

five basins. Our League is attending monthly meetings.

Diane Merrill is representing the Fresno League at the LVW of California Water Committee and Bob Merrill is offering technical support. Discussion at the June 9 Water Committee conference call centered on obtaining more information on the large volume of water bills before the legislature including several on adjudication of groundwater rights. Diane and Bob plan to attend a face-to-face meeting of the Water Committee in Sacramento on July 14.



On several occasions since the 1990's, the California Legislature voted on bills, supported by the LWV of California, to establish a Medicare-type health insurance for all Californians. The California Universal Healthcare Act actually passed in 2006 and 2008, only to be vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger. Now a much smaller "Healthcare for All" bill has passed the Senate and likely will be sent to the Governor. SB 4, sponsored by the influential progressive Ricardo Lara and supported by the LWV of California, would attempt to grant ACA health insurance equivalency to California's 2.6 million unauthorized immigrants. Under SB 4, they would get the same Medi-Cal or Covered California benefits offered to citizens and documented residents. But there are obstacles beyond the likely veto by budget-conscious Governor Brown.

The heart of SB 4 is the expansion of Medi-Cal to include unauthorized immigrants. California and New York have long histories of providing safety net services, including Medicaid, to working immigrants who were not at risk for deportation. ("permanent residents under color of law," or PRUCOL). Social services cutbacks during the Reagan and Clinton administrations made Medicaid less accessible to unauthorized immigrants. In a recent series of setbacks the ACA did not allow their participation in Obamacare and the President denied ACA benefits to his widely hailed modest expansion of PRUCOL residents. This means that unless further immigration reform is enacted, any expansion of Medi-Cal to unauthorized immigrants will be paid for by California tax revenues.

California already has the largest Medicaid (Medi-Cal) program, both in absolute numbers and in percentage of population, in the country. Medi-Cal also pays among the lowest professional fees of any state. As a result, medical services for Medi-Cal beneficiaries are in short supply. Here we are talking not only about our shortage of professional healthcare manpower, but also of health care administration that must deal with the complex issues of residency and incomes in the immigrant population.

In formulating SB 4, Lara realized that some unauthorized immigrants would not qualify for Medi-Cal benefits because

of earning too high an income, thus defeating the "Healthcare for All" motto. This required positing a complex modification of Covered California (requesting several variances from the Department of Health and Human Services) or creating a parallel exchange, further ramping up administrative costs.

The initial costs and savings and even the budget of SB 4 cannot be predicted. Metrics of budget and performance should always be at the core of health care proposals. On the other hand, delayed and uncompensated health care costs California hospitals and clinics several billions of dollars yearly that must be offset by all of us, one way or another. Especially difficult to offset is the long-term cost of inadequate health care to California's families

Dr. Bertken analyzes Valley Fever bill

SB 115 (2015) would give a million dollars to the State Department of Public Health to continue its Valley Fever Vaccine Project. The Project provides grants for vaccine research, modest contributions to what has been steady progress toward effective immunization over the last two decades.

No vaccine exists to prevent any fungal disease, and most fungal and parasitic diseases have been assumed to be resistant to prevention by vaccination because they can recur repeatedly in people who have been previously infected. However, coccidioidomycosis does not recur in patients who have been previously infected (barring extreme immune suppression). This was the starting point for efforts to create a vaccine.

Crude extracts of the fungus and genetically attenuated live fungi have demonstrated the ability to prevent infections in mice. However, due to adverse effects of these agents, research has focused on tailor-made fungal-like proteins that elicit a preventative and durable immune response. Researchers appear to be close to proposing clinical trials in humans.

However, financial interest in the testing and commercial production of this vaccine will be modest due to the limited geographic distribution of the disease, the moderate number of serious cases, and the improbability of an epidemic.

The LWV should support this bill, but understand that getting an effective vaccine to the at-risk population will require exponential increases in government funding.

Mental Health

by Francine Farber



The Behavioral Health Board is still neither complete nor official. Nine members have been appointed out of a possible 15, and it won't become official until the County approves its new by-laws which were submitted several weeks ago.

Nonetheless, the Board is meeting and conducting business with an interim chair and no other officers. In June the Board received a new Vision and Mission statement as follows which will be up for Board approval in July.

Vision: to ensure effective and timely services for Fresno County residents with mental health and/or substance use disorders.

Mission: The Behavioral Health Board advocates for clients with mental health and/or substance use disorders to reach their highest potential through effective and timely culturally competent services; elimination of

stigma; support for family, caregivers and service providers; and community awareness and education.

The Department of Behavioral Health reported that it is looking at outcome and evaluation tools and may use outside providers of evaluation services as well as in-house programs.

The Board confirmed its meeting schedule for various committees. You are invited to attend.

Adult Services: First Monday, 10 a.m., Blue Sky, 1617 E. Saginaw

Children's Services: Fourth Tuesday, 9 a.m., **Comprehensive Youth Services, 3747 E Shields**

Justice: Second bi-monthly Monday, 1:30 p.m., (next meeting 7/13) Blue Sky

Substance User Disorders: First Wednesday, 10 a.m., FC Elections Training Rm, 4525 East Hamilton, Fresno

FULL BOARD MEETINGS ARE HELD THIRD WEDNESDAY, 2:30 P.M., BLUE SKY

Ice Cream Social * Tuesday, August 18, 7 p.m.

- ◆ Women's Equality Day Award to Kerri Donis, Fresno Fire Chief
- ◆ Scholarship Winners from FCC and Fresno State
- ◆ Silent Auction: Call Patty to make a contribution: 472-3018
- ◆ Lots of Ice Cream



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FRESNO, CALIFORNIA 93755

Law Office of
Sara Hedgpeth-Harris
Attorney at Law

5445 E. Lane Avenue
Fresno, CA 93727
(559) 233-0907
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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. 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.

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.

Yearly Dues Individual - \$70 ~ Family - \$100 (2 members, same address) ~ Student - \$30

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