



The Fresno VOTER

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LWVUS approves federal study and other motions, elects new officers

Over 600 delegates and members attended the LWVUS Convention in Atlanta last month. In addition to electing new officers and directors, the Convention also adopted a national program for the 2010-12 biennium.

A recommended study of the Federal Role in Public Education was approved and will focus on the role of the federal government in education policymaking, with possible consideration of funding, common standards and/or governance relationships among all levels of the government. The scope will be dependent on available resources, including committee and LWVUS staff time. Local leagues, including LWVF, will be given the option of participating in this study.

Another adopted motion approved concurrence with Maine and Maryland state league positions on marriage equality. This position calls for support for equal rights for all under state and federal law, legislation to equalize legal rights available to same-gender couples with those available to heterosexual couples, and support for same-gender couples to marry under civil law.

The Convention also voted to adopt concurrence with the LWV of Saratoga County, NY to support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for president until the abolishment of the Electoral College is accomplished.

LWV Florida had its motion approved to support lifting travel restrictions for Americans going to Cuba, while the Tompkins County, NY league gained approval for its resolution to support safe drilling and mining for energy resources.

Another approved motion from an Indiana league called upon the LWVUS Board to advocate strongly for bills that legislate for improved Medicare for all, while a Wisconsin league had its motion approved to urge the federal government to take all necessary steps to address the Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

New LWVUS Officers

**Elisabeth MacNamara,
president**

Judy Duffy, 1st vice president

Judy Davis, 2nd vice president

**Susan M. Wilson,
secretary/treasurer**

Calendar

Saturday, July 24
Board Annual Retreat
9 a.m.—1 p.m.
Home of Francine Farber
707 West Fairmont Ave.,
Fresno

Wednesday, August 25
Ice Cream Social
See Details Page 3

Thursday, August 26
Women's Equality Day

**LEAGUE HANDBOOK
IS BEING SENT TO YOU
UNDER SEPARATE
COVER**

WATCH FOR IT!

President's Message



Our second annual Minigrant Expo on May 26 was a huge success. Six teachers who had been awarded \$500 each to develop creative projects to enhance learning about the U.S. Constitution put on a terrific “show and tell” at Roosevelt High School. Three of them were from that school, one was from the Teilman Education Center for expelled youth, and the other two were from the Worsley Court School for adjudicated youth.

Perhaps the most interesting project came from two staff members at Worsley School, one a teacher and the other the school librarian. They had developed a unit on censorship based on understanding the First Amendment. Students read a selected banned book and held a mock trial based on the scenario of a school board banning the book.

Our benefactor for the grant funds, League member Bette Peterson, was so impressed by the projects and the teachers' enthusiasm and interest in each others' work, that she plans to give us further support to continue the mini-grants. We are also reaching out to the Fresno County community to try to establish a fund to give many more mini-grants annually.

There are a number of ways to set up one or more of the mini-grants. The League has chosen the topic of Immigration for next year, and although in the past we have limited the applicants to social studies teachers, next year we are opening it up to English teachers as well. Interested donors could support the League's topic or choose their own topic; they could limit applicants to those coming from specific schools rather than the entire county.

If you would like to make a donation of \$500 to League for this purpose, it will be tax deductible if you make out your check to the Education Fund. Or if a group of friends wants to get together to sponsor a grant, we would appreciate that. Of course if you are connected with a business or civic organization that wants to support one or more mini-grants, we would be happy to talk with you and set this up.

Since teachers are concerned about being required to teach to the test, the mini-grants give them an opportunity to use their creativity to make their classrooms more interesting and actively engage their students.

Francine

New Members

Change of e-mail address

Shirley Valett

Shirleyv1929@gmail.com

New/Prospective Member Brunch

We hosted a brunch for new and prospective members in the Asian Room at Stone Soup on June 12. Francine Farber welcomed everyone and invited the League directors in attendance to describe how they got involved with the League, while our guests introduced themselves and also explained how they came to join.

Eileen Bryan gave a brief history of the LWVUS and California leagues. Jane Worsley described the League's mission and other directors present gave an overview of their portfolios in the areas of Government, Social Policy and Natural Resources. LWVF's role in recent national studies of the National Popular Vote and Immigration was described. Our leadership in developing county-wide voluntary preschool for all and in partnering with other organizations around improving the school dropout rate was explained.

It was generally expressed by our guests that the presentations gave them a better understanding of the League, its mission and the benefits and responsibilities that go along with membership in the organization. Several of those present indicated their interest in monitoring boards and committees, especially in the areas of health, mental health and justice.



Education

by Kay Bertken

Fresno Unified School District has been occupied with two major issues over the last month— its budget and a possible facilities bond measure. At its meeting on June 16 the Board of Trustees voted to approve both. The approved budget accommodates a \$35 million reduction in funding. Larger class sizes which eliminate teaching positions held by temporary and probationary faculty, as well as cuts in classified positions and the central administration, close most of the budget gap. **Still on the table for negotiation with the bargaining units is a proposal for furlough time equivalent to a slightly more than 1% pay cut.**

The board determined to put a \$280 million bond measure on the November ballot. **If 55% of the voters support the measure, the District can begin work on implementing its Facilities Master Plan, which identified nearly a billion dollars in needed facilities improvements.** Unlike previous bonds, this one will not build new schools; its focus is upgrading our older campuses. Millions will go to replacing portables with permanent classrooms, to career-vocational facilities and technology. More will go toward reimagining the alternative schools to make them more effective in combating the districts drop-out numbers. Because an old bond is retiring in 2011, this new bond would not raise tax rates from their current level.

In addition, in the last weeks, FUSD has partnered with other California Districts –including Clovis and Sanger in this region —on a new application for federal Race to the Top funding. California’s previous application was weakened from lack of support by the California Teachers Union. The RTT desire to tie student performance measures to teacher evaluations has not been embraced by the CTA. FUSD was particularly pleased to have the Fresno Teachers’ Association as its partner on this latest application.

Members of our League continue to attend meetings following up on the Drop-Out Summit we helped sponsor last fall. Current planning at those meetings involves identifying and bringing together local non-profits that run similar programs so that they might develop shared outcome measures to assess the impact of their efforts. For example, there are many groups in town that do mentoring, but most are unaware of how their work impacts grades or attendance or graduation rates. Getting student data from the schools is a difficult hurdle for non-school organizations to overcome. Working together, they might forge agreements that would facilitate data sharing.



Your League gratefully accepts celebratory and memorial gifts

*Thanks this month to
Patsy Anderson
Jacquie Canfield
Murray and Francine Farber
Rudy and Mary Savala*

Ice Cream Social

**Wednesday
August 25
7 p.m.**



**Speaker: Mark Scott
Fresno City Manager**

**In the gardens of
Jennifer & Hugh Williamson
2655 West Celeste Ave.**

Fresno

Shaw to Bullard:

West on Bullard

Left on Briarwood

Left on Celeste

Members & Guests Welcome!

Personal Rapid Transit could be Fresno first

by **Dennis Manning**

With the passage of Measure C in 2006 a \$36 million "New Technology Reserve Fund" was established. The ballot language specifically singled out "Personal Rapid Transit" or PRT as an eligible transit system.

PRT is a fully electrically powered automated driverless system that operates in a network with small 4-6 passenger vehicles. It has some remarkable features. All trips are non-stop. There is virtually no waiting time as the vehicles wait for you much like a taxi cab waits for passengers. There are no schedules. You simply select your destination. The network part of PRT is similar to the way a freeway forms a network. You get on a freeway via an on-ramp. Barring congestion you travel non-stop anywhere in the system until you reach your chosen off-ramp.

This system is unlike that for buses, which are not part of a network. They are a collection of loops or routes. To move from loop to loop requires time-consuming transfers.

PRT systems are usually designed to be elevated above the street on very light-weight structures. It is possible to design them to run at ground level and below at increased cost.

The result of the networking, the small vehicles, and the automation is a system that costs about only one-quarter as much as a light rail system based on route length, and one-tenth as much based on a per station cost. It is also about four times faster for typical trips than cars in many urban settings. The lower cost, greater accessibility and higher speed lead to projections that PRT can be built and operated without subsidy.

Fresno's connection? Fresno is the only city in the U.S. that has specifically

earmarked funds for PRT. Many cities have PRT under consideration, but only Fresno has the funds to get started. The City of Fresno has yet to indicate in any way that it is eager to be first in the nation in developing PRT. The only activity to date is to await a small feasibility study.

The world's first PRT systems are now up and running at Heathrow Airport in London, and the new City of Mazda in Abu Dhabi. Sweden and Korea are close behind.

Suggested web site to learn more
www.prtconsulting.com

Dennis Manning is a new member of LWVF and serves on the COG Transportation Technical Committee, the Public Transportation Infrastructure Study Citizens Advisory Committee, and the Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee.

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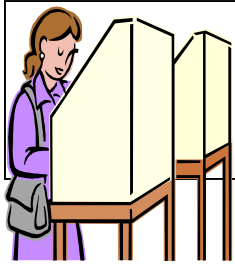
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Voter Services

by Liz Shields

June Primary Election

Many thanks to the forty-five members who helped sort the absentee ballots, some on multiple days, for a total of 202 hours, and to the fifteen members who staffed the phones on Election Day. The League will earn approximately \$2,300 from these endeavors.

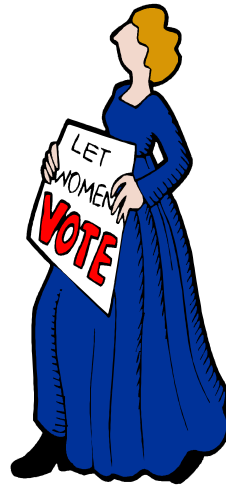
Candidate Forums

Candidate forums were conducted on May 10 and 11 for the two Board of Supervisor races, three City Council races and the County Assessor race. The forums were aired on Channel 96 and Channel 98. DVDs of the forums were provided to Channel 30, Channel 18 and the Fresno Bee for loading on their web sites. However, none of the forums was subsequently located on these web sites. Before the November elections we will have to research ways to record or transfer the forums into a suitable computer format and look at upgrading our own web site to take streaming video.



Easy Voter Guides

Approximately 3,500 English and 1,500 Spanish Easy Voter Guides were distributed to the Fresno County Library, various community groups and approximately 30 individuals who responded to our president's letter to the editor. Unfortunately it was later revealed that the candidate lists in the Guide were not accurate and that the Secretary of State had not collaborated in its production.



Speakers Bureau

I spoke to three small groups about the propositions. However, we have already received requests to speak to two groups regarding the propositions on the November ballot.

High School Voter Registration

The High School Voter Registration study sponsored by the LWVUS is designed to compare

classroom presentations versus assemblies to determine the most effective way to present and encourage voter registration among high school seniors. Four schools in the Fresno Area, Fowler High, Kerman High, Hoover High and Sunnyside High, were selected for participation in the study based on their ethnic diversity. LWVUS will earn \$920 for assisting in the study. Classroom presentations on voter registration were made to seniors at Fowler High School and Hoover High School in May resulting in 104 new registered voters. Both schools have large Latino and Asian student populations.



Two other schools not selected for participation by LWVUS have nonetheless requested our presentation on voter registration to assist in signing up youth in the fall.

Natural Resources

by Mary Savala



Copper River Ranch projects to go ahead. The BIA asked for a continuance and said that they thought the amendment would exclude all projects in Copper River Ranch instead of only a few and needed time to work out the language with staff. BIA wanted all gated community developments to be excluded. In other words, League and development made similar arguments, but for different reasons. **We were assured that we would be included in discussions held over any new language that the developers were asking for in the amendment.**



The City adopted its sidewalk policy prior to 2000 and adopted the City General Plan with sidewalks required on both sides of the street in 2002; mitigation for Copper River Ranch certified in 2002 calls for sidewalks to mitigate air quality emissions. **The City expressly directed the consulting engineers for Copper River Ranch's Master Conditional Use Permit application to meet all requirements of policy and mitigation.**

It is expected that the Planning Commission will recommend the amendment go

Sidewalks Take a Pounding

An amendment to the City of Fresno's General Plan specifying a requirement for sidewalks for all new development in the City, including privately maintained streets in gated communities, went before the Planning Commission on June 16.

There are some exemptions to the amendment including approvals of alternative pedestrian access if they meet city pedestrian access standards and connect all residences to common buildings, facilities, amenities, public right of ways and other residences in a way that minimizes out-of-direction travel.

A second exemption will exempt cul-de-sacs which are on streets less than 200 feet long and have 10 units or less. The last amendment will exclude those cases where both a special permit and a tentative (or vesting tentative) tract map which proposes private streets have received final approval by the City of Fresno and all administrative appeal periods for those entitlements have expired.

I spoke to the Planning Commission supporting the amendment but opposing the second and third exemptions based on League positions regarding pedestrian access, safety and air quality positions. **The exemption for short cul-de-sacs still places pedestrians (including children) on the street.** And the third exemption is based on Copper River Ranch's argument that a diagram depicting a typical street of 44' width, with and without sidewalks, was approved as a part of a Master Conditional Use Permit November 3, 2004.

The commission voted unanimously to recommend the amendment to the Council as proposed by staff. League argued against the exceptions for cul-de-sacs and allowing a few

to the City Council as written, but it seems important to speak up against the chipping away of air quality and pedestrian safety provisions in local law. Already, some developers are questioning the requirement for sidewalks if they have relied in their planning on the history of 12 gated communities allowed to develop since 2002 without sidewalks, the old "everyone has been doing it argument"!

Water Going Down the Drain?


Note that the LWVC has taken a stand opposing the Water Bond for the November election.

We are grateful to our sponsors for their support in "Making Democracy Work."
 League members who wish to be sponsors or to secure sponsorship for us, may contact Francine Farber at 226-5455

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE	PAGE
National Convention.....	1
President’s Message/New Members.....	2
Education.....	3
Personal Rapid Transit.....	4
Voter Services.....	5
Natural Resources.....	6
Our Sponsors.....	4/7

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

Please send your check payable to the League of Women Voters, Fresno, with registration form (below),
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