



# The Fresno VOTER

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**Calendar**

Thursday, July 7  
 Educ. Comm. Meeting  
 752 E. Buckingham  
 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, July 19  
 Bd. Of Supervisors  
 County Redistricting

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

Tuesday, August 23  
 Ice Cream Social  
 See page 3

**We welcome members and guests to all meetings!**

## Nuclear plant debated at Lunch & Learn

by Murray Farber

### *Is the risk worth the potential gain?*

For almost two hours, 30 persons at a League Lunch and Learn listened as John Hutson, CEO of Fresno Nuclear Energy, spoke about the need to build an energy park in Fresno County with two nuclear reactors. He fired off an impressive array of numbers dealing with megawatts, conversion of “greywater” for agricultural use, and circulated a copy of a half-inch nuclear pellet that provides as much energy as 1,780 pounds of coal or 149 gallons of oil.

However, his audience was equally armed with questions challenging the safety of nuclear energy. Dr. Dick Haas pointed out that Germany, whose Prime Minister Angela Merkel has a Ph.D. in physics, has decided to close its nuclear plants by 2021.

Hutson responded that Germany was hypocritical and “showboating” since it will buy electricity generated by France’s nuclear plants.

Visitor Sally Lyon urged that the energy park function without any nuclear plant. Hutson countered that solar energy will be insufficient and must join with other renewable energy. “Solar only operates 33 percent of the time and is predictable only during certain times of the day,” he said. His figures also indicated that a wind farm would need 235 square miles to produce the same amount of electricity as a 1,000 megawatt nuclear power plant which would require only one percent as much area.

Hutson was repeatedly pressed about the safety issue with focus on why build in an earthquake area. He agreed, “Nothing is 100 percent safe” but said his company is searching for a Valley site that is not prone to earthquakes and if there is no such place, the construction becomes “moot.”

Also stressing safety, Diane Merrill questioned the disposal of nuclear waste, with



*(continued on page 4)*

# President's Message



**O**ur mini-grant project is officially ended after several years that included 24 grants for 25 teachers throughout Fresno County. Awards went to creative teachers at Fresno Unified, the County Court Schools, Kingsburg, Selma, Kings Canyon, Kerman and even a charter school in Parlier.

Teachers were thrilled to receive \$500 to institute hands-on projects with their students, for the first two years of the mini-grants about the U.S. Constitution and this year about immigration. Many spent their funds on technology — computers and flip cameras were very popular — and these purchases led to development of videos and other filmed records. Many students wrote essays and poems, studied artworks, interviewed family members. Others took field trips, developed instructional games and put on mock trials, all the while integrating reading, writing and speaking, the arts and technology into their social studies curriculum.

For all of these benefits the students and teachers have to thank our member Bette Peterson, who made the mini-grants possible with her generous gift of \$10,000 to us from her late husband's estate. This year we received additional contributions from the Educational Employees Credit Union, Rotary Club of Fresno, East Fresno Rotary, Pelco and the Fresno First Bank.

Our deepest thanks go to these contributors, and especially to Bette, for her support of the League and of public education.

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**I hope our members who are residents of the City of Fresno will make phone calls, send e-mails and write letters to their council representatives in support of the position of Independent Police Auditor.** This was a position strongly supported by your League. Now that the first incumbent is leaving and budgetary pressures mount, it is important that we don't let this position slip away. A grand jury report soon to be made public indicates that the powers of this office need strengthening or else there is not much point in maintaining it. As far as I am concerned (and please note this is a personal, not necessarily an official League point of view) the office has to exist in Fresno, and has to be given some teeth. Before the end of June the grand jury report will be published. You can read it by entering "Grand Jury Reports in Fresno County" in your search engine, and then clicking on "reports". It will be report #7 for 2010-2011.

*Francine*

## Member News

Please make notes in your roster accordingly.

### Change in E-mail address

**Toni Eames**  
teames559@gmail.com

**Liz Shields**  
elizabeth@mail.fresnostate.edu



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*This month we received generous donations for the Friant lawsuit from  
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*All donations should be sent to  
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1345 Bulldog Lane  
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**ANNUAL ICE CREAM SOCIAL**

TUESDAY, August 23

At the home of  
 Dr. Juan and Clara Touya  
 2351 West Warner Avenue  
 7 p.m.

**WATCH FOR THE NATIONAL LEAGUE STUDY**  
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# Transportation

by Dennis Manning



Transportation budgets across the nation are on hold as Congress debates the massive transportation authorization bill. Nearly everything about the authorization is on the table. This includes the length of the authorization (from 2 to 6 years), the funding amount (from \$300 billion to \$550 billion), and the split between highway funding, public transit funding, and non-motorized transportation such as walking and cycling. The federal budget in turn exerts great influence on the nature and scope of state and local projects. For example, the federal budget could determine whether the first phase of the California High Speed Rail Project to begin here by 2012 goes forward or is delayed indefinitely.

## **Public Transportation Infrastructure Study (PTIS)**

With completion of PTIS Fresno will use the study results to assist in forming the long range transportation plans contained in the 25 year Regional Transportation Plan. Of particular interest is formation of the New Technology Advisory Committee. The Committee will make recommendations on how Measure C funds will best be used to realize the voter mandates of Measure C. Currently Fresno is the only jurisdiction in the United States with funds to move forward with the new automated transportation technologies referred to as PRT, or personal rapid transit. For those interested in knowing more about how this industry is unfolding, an excellent web site to begin is: <http://faculty.washington.edu/jbs/itrans/>

## **Meeting with City Planner John Dugan**

Mary Savala and Dennis Manning met at the invitation of Mr. Dugan to provide input on our positions regarding the changes to zoning and building code regulations. It was part of Mr. Dugan's series of interviews with some 80 people representing a wide range of Fresno interests. The goal of developing the new "form based" land use regulations is to streamline the onerous building permit process and ultimately to yield a higher quality of life and more sustainable land uses.

## **NUCLEAR**

*(continued from page 1)*

special concern about plutonium. Hutson explained the spent nuclear rods, including plutonium, would be sent by ship to France where 96 percent would be recycled and 4 percent turned into obsidian. No plutonium would be returned to the U.S.

During his talk, Hutson cited his volunteer service with the Marjaree Mason Center as inspiring him to bring jobs and economic benefits to the Valley. We need to change the way we do things to turn around what some call "Appalachia West," he said. Instead of Fresno paying the highest energy cost in the country, the energy park will be able to offer corporations a lower electricity rate to encourage them to relocate to the Valley while offering jobs plus water for farmers.



**John Hutson**

Among other key points, Hutson declared:

**\*Fresno Nuclear, backed by French giant Areva, is not seeking to sell stock or acquire investors. "We don't need approval from the cities of Sanger or San Joaquin or the League of Women Voters but I want to have sunlight on the issue, so we can be open with facts."**

**\*The energy park is designed to clean brackish water.**

**\*Saudi Arabia plans to build 16 nuclear power plants and China is planning for 30 to 50 over the next 50 years.**

**\*No insurance company will cover a nuclear mishap and the enterprise will have to self-insure through required set-asides.**

**\*Although the Fresno County supervisors recently declined to take a stand on his original request to support a nuclear park, his proposal actually needs approval from the California Energy Commission and the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.**

Two League members cited the potential for disaster. Shirley Valett said, "Even if the risk is minuscule, the result could be so horrific, I have to be concerned." Mary Savala added that we don't comprehend yet the economic and human effect of the accident at Fukushima.



# An EIR for Lost Lake

by Radley Reep

On May 24 the Fresno County Board of Supervisors decided that the preliminary study of the Lost Lake Park Master Plan had gone on long enough and that it was time to begin the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). That decision was in opposition to a recommendation from county staff and from the project consultant that the Master Plan needed two more years of preliminary study to determine the presence of the environmentally threatened California tiger salamander.

The Board directed staff to seek a grant from the San Joaquin River Conservancy in the amount of \$550,000 to cover the cost of an EIR. If all goes well, County staff estimates that an environmental consultant will be selected by May of next year. The EIR could be ready for certification a year or two after that, depending on the



complexity of the environmental assessment and the number of changes that are made to the plan.

The planning process has been long and expensive. Beginning in 2007 the County accepted a \$400,000 grant from the San Joaquin River Conservancy to design a Master Plan for the park.

Early on in the development of the Master Plan, the Board concluded that the park should not be mined nor remade into a golf course. Nonetheless, business interests continued to influence the design of the plan, and as the

years passed, the Master Plan grew in size and complexity. What began as a call for minor enhancement of the park ended up as a plan for major capital improvements: the installation of 1,500 parking spaces, the construction of 23 restrooms and the displacement of 2.5 million tons of earth – all at a staggering cost of \$70,000,000.

At the May 24 hearing, two Board members intimated that the plan was overly ambitious. Members of the public are concerned that the current park design easily accommodates large-scale sporting events. Table Mountain Rancheria may still be interested in operating and improving the park.

The League recently reminded the County that all discussions concerning a possible public/private agreement to operate and maintain the park must remain open and transparent. We plan to monitor the process by which the County selects an environmental consultant for the EIR, and to participate fully in the environmental review of the Master Plan.

## Education News

by Kay Bertken



The FUSD Board of Trustees passed its 2011-2012 budget by a 4 to 3 vote in May. Since the State had not passed its own budget yet, Fresno and school districts across California were forced to make assumptions about the extent of their necessary cuts.

For the last three years the total reduction in State funds for Fresno Unified totaled \$115 million. Even if there were no further State cuts this year, the District would still have to absorb slightly more than \$27 million of those previous cuts. Taking into consideration the slight recent increase in the State's income and assuming an "all cuts" budget, the District would have to absorb an additional \$29 million cut in State payments in the 2011-2012 school year. **The District budget that was passed cuts \$34 million, leaving \$22 million more to be phased in by 2013-2014.**

Among the more difficult and controversial cuts was the elimination of hundreds of jobs, though the number of actual layoffs has been declining (currently around 90 teachers) as employees accept early retirement offers or

alternative employment. Accounting for some of the loss of teaching positions was the determination to increase class sizes in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade to an average of 26.

**The School District is also involved in redrawing trustee areas to balance the area populations after the 2010 census. In December the Board will hold a hearing and vote on a plan. In the meantime, demographic information will be collected, draft plans will be presented and input will be solicited.**

At the June 15 Board meeting, the Board accepted the recommendations of the Superintendent's Early Learning Task Force for "an integrated, structured, standards-based approach to early learning" in the District. The report recommended programs that address the developmental continuum of early childhood from zero to entry into kindergarten. The report pointed to the need for further monitoring and alignment of the District's current fragmented pre-K early learning programs, providing effective parenting training for young parents, increasing access to early learning programs and working toward continued collaborative efforts with other local agencies.

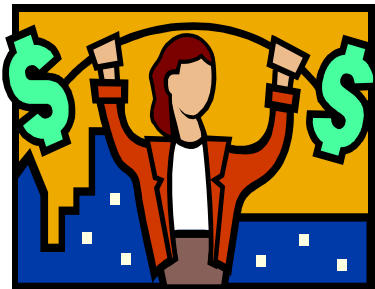
# Natural Resources

by Mary Savala



## Measure C

The Measure C Citizens Oversight Committee (COC) met in February to review program and agency budgets and expenditure reports for the measure's fiscal year 2009-2010. The COC noted an Administration budget for the Fresno County Transportation Agency (FCTA) of 1 percent of total tax revenues in keeping with the expenditure plan passed by the Voters in 2006. And the COC also noted that FCTA planned to spend



another 1.23 percent in a category labeled Services and Supplies which is equally distributed over all six expenditure plan programs. Administrative Services and Supplies includes outside professional services such as accounting, financial advising, auditing, legislative advocacy and public outreach and education.

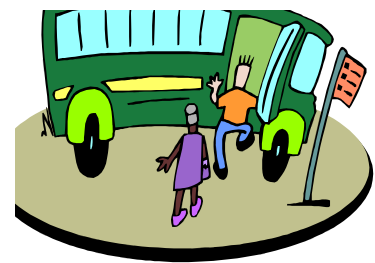
The COC is charged with annually reporting to the public on its review of program expenditures and on the COC's recommendations on the operations of the Measure C extension.

This year committee members drafted an annual report which the FCTA refused to publish in conjunction with its annual report. The FCTA staff took exception to language in the COC's report about the category of Administrative expenditure and the category of Services and Supplies. It was agreed to rewrite the paragraph in the report in more neutral tones and to add to the next COC agenda a discussion of the category of Services and Supplies. It may be that the Measure C Extension should be amended to formalize this kind of expenditure and to place limits on its amounts. League has long taken exception to the expenditure of Measure funds for public outreach claiming that it is more of an agency promotional effort than actual public education.

## Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

A special committee has been meeting for four months to write implementing guidelines and policies for the distribution of an estimated \$15M to be used as incen-

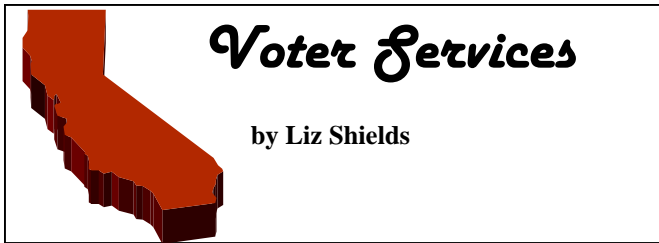
tives to concentrate development around transit stations along Bus Rapid Transit Corridors. The first priority corridors are all within the City of Fresno along Blackstone, Kings Canyon, and Shaw Avenue. The study also recommended the best buy for the buck was an express bus system with dedicated bus lanes rather than an investment in a fixed rail system at this time.



The TOD committee has agreed to recommend the entire TOD funds be best spent within the City of Fresno and highest points be given to private development proposals for incentive funding in the downtown area. Incentives would include waiver of Fresno City impact fees, or subsidies for capital projects necessary to implement development such as sewer and water improvements. The next meeting of the TOD committee will be July 20<sup>th</sup> at which time priority criteria, policies and guidelines will be finalized for recommendation for the COG Policy Board's approval.

### **Did You Know?**

**Melissa Breach is the new  
Executive Director of LWV  
California**



### **State Redistricting**

On June 10 the Citizens Redistricting Commission released the first draft of boundaries of the new Congressional, State Senate, State Assembly and Board of Equalization Districts. These new boundaries required by the census data of 2010 are based on the following criteria:

*Have equal population size; be compliant with the Voting Rights Act; have contiguous boundaries; try to minimize division of city, county, neighborhood and community boundaries; be geographically compact with a fairly regular shape; not be drawn to favor or discriminate against an incumbent, candidate or political party.*

Fresno County would have five Congressional representatives compared to the current four although the configuration of the boundaries may lead to some changes in representation.

There would be three State Senate districts in Fresno County but only two State Assembly districts. Outlines of these proposed districts are found at <http://wedrawthelines.ca.gov/maps-congress-1st-draft.html> The Commission met in Fresno for the first time on June 23

### **County Redistricting**

2010 census data showed that population growth in Fresno County was disproportionately high in District 1 (West Fresno and western Fresno County) and in District 5 (Clovis and north-eastern Fresno County). Growth in District 4 (south-east Fresno County) was approximately equivalent to the overall growth in the county. District 2 (North Fresno) and District 3 (Central and South Fresno) had lower growth rates. Consequently District 2 and District 3 boundaries had to be expanded to return to approximately equal population levels in all districts.

The redistricting task force composed of five commissioners, each appointed by a Supervisor, held open meetings during May and June to determine the optimal position of the new boundaries with the aim of minimizing the number of boundary changes and maintaining the integrity of communities. Four options were selected from the eight under consideration and prioritized by consensus of the commissioners. Detailed maps of all the options may be viewed at <http://www.co.fresno.ca.us/DepartmentPage.aspx?id=46989> with the following priorities

Option 5 - Priority 1, Option 7 - Priority 2, Option 8 – Priority 3, Option 1 – Priority 4

The task force's recommendations are being forwarded to the Board of Supervisors who will make the final decision on the boundary changes. The first discussion of these changes is scheduled for the Board's agenda on July 19.

### **City Council Boundaries**

City staffers have proposed many changes in the City Council boundaries aimed at equalizing the population differences between districts and to making the districts more compact. Proposed changes may be viewed at <http://media.fresnobee.com/smedia/2011/06/14/12/25/1o5KZm.So.8.pdf>

The City Council held a hearing on the proposed changes with an opportunity for public input at its meeting on June 23 with a final decision expected at the June 30 meeting.

### **High School Voter Registration**

Genny Mayhew and I discussed the high school voter registration report she brought back from the LWVUS conference in Washington D.C. Similar to our experience in Fresno participants in the voter registration project found that spring semester was the best time and classroom presentations were the best setting for successful registrations. Genny has suggested setting up Facebook and Twitter accounts to help the League connect with young people.

## ◆ WHAT IS A “LEAGUE STUDY?”

- ◆ A League study is a process through which the national, state or local league gathers information so that it may take an informed policy position on an issue concerning government, natural resources, or social policy.
- ◆ *Here is the process currently in use by the League of Women Voters of the United States for its study on the Federal Role in Education.*
  
- ◆ Member leagues throughout the country have voted that this issue is a priority.
  
- ◆ The national league has appointed a study committee with representatives from leagues throughout the U.S. California’s representative on this committee is Joanne Leavitt of Santa Monica.
  
- ◆ The committee determines the scope of the study and determines what specific questions it requires answers to in order to develop a policy on this issue. The study is limited to those questions selected by the committee.
  
- ◆ Local leagues are asked to voluntarily participate in the study.
  
- ◆ They receive background research materials and bibliographies for further reading if desired. The specific questions that the national League wants an answer to are circulated.
  
- ◆ Participation includes educating members and the public about the issue through one or more workshops. Then league members are asked to come to a “consensus meeting” where they vote on the specific questions, and see if their league has come to consensus. The results of the consensus meeting are sent to the national league, which compiles similar results from all over the country.
  
- ◆ The national league decides whether there is a national consensus on their specific questions. If there is, they develop a policy statement based on this consensus. If there is not, then they issue a report indicating that they have not taken a stand because of lack of consensus.
  
- ◆ **The Fresno League of Women Voters has decided to participate in the national study on “The Federal Role in Education.” The Fresno County Office of Education has agreed to co-sponsor the study. We propose to have two or three workshops to educate ourselves and the public during October 2011, and then a consensus meeting for members in November. Results are due to the national league by the end of November. The study will be co-chaired by members Jacquie Canfield and Kay Bertken.**

◆ **WANT TO HELP WITH THE STUDY? CALL KAY AT 226-2720**




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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

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