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The *Fresno* **VOTER**



BOARD MEETING CHANGE
Regular Board meetings will be held on the third Monday of each month.

Friday, July 29
Board Retreat, 9 a.m.—noon
Home of Mary Savala
7490 Toletachi Road, Fresno
All Welcome to Attend

Monday, August 22
Regular Board Meeting
5 p.m., League Office

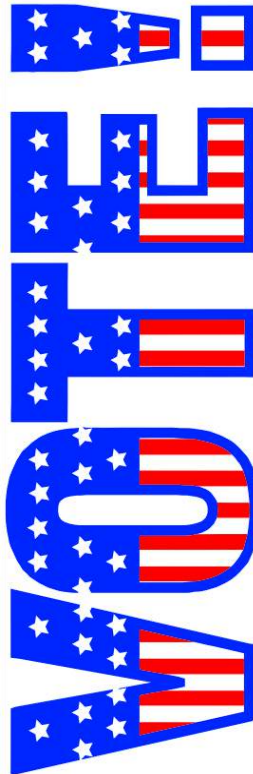
Tuesday, August 23
Ice Cream Social & Auction
Scholarship Presentation
Women’s Equality Award
7 p.m.
Home of Francine Farber
See flyer page



Help Wanted !!!



Are you interested in learning more about water issues and monitoring developments in this area? Contact Diane Merrill at diane.b.merrill@comcast.net, or call 434-8046.



Would you like to assist Voter Services in educating the public about ballot initiatives for the November general election? To volunteer to receive training in order to help with presentations to groups requesting non-partisan explanations, contact Marianne Kast at fourkasts@gmail.com or call 279-7937.

President's Message



What would be a great thing to do to escape, at least for a brief period of time, the depression brought on by such a negative, shocking and often hateful campaign season? I found the perfect answer, and that was to work with a terrific committee to read scholarship applications from Fresno State and Fresno City College students and select 11 recipients for the Bette Peterson Scholarship Awards. Reading the amazing and sometimes unbelievable stories of these college students can make one feel positive and hopeful again.

Many of the students had seemingly insurmountable hurdles to overcome, including extreme poverty, discrimination, homelessness, drug abuse, early pregnancies, physical and mental abuse, medical problems and the need to support a single parent and several siblings.

Despite the difficulties, these students have not given up. They believe that education is the answer for them and they have all achieved a minimum of a 3.0 grade point average. In addition, most have become involved in volunteer activities on campus and in the community. Some of the activities include involvement in student government, serving at Food Banks, tutoring disadvantaged children, working to help drug abusers and victims of drug abuse, community clean-up projects and working on political campaigns.

One very special young man is from Honduras. His father was killed in that country and his mother left for the United States, with no further family contact. This young man literally walked to the U.S. and ended up in Fresno. His dream was to work toward becoming a member of the California Highway Patrol so he could help people and to earn money for his sisters back home. He has a wonderful foster mother as well as high school and college counselors who have enabled him to graduate from high school and enter Fresno City College. The League is one of the groups that has embraced him and is offering him one of our scholarships.

Bette Peterson's heart has been similarly touched by the stories of these wonderful students and has given the League \$10,000 per year for the last several years for us to distribute to deserving, financially challenged students. Bette, thank you for trusting us with this responsibility; we are honored to be involved in such a worthy endeavor.

Nyla

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

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Member News

Roster changes

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The League is now a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization so your dues payments and all donations are tax deductible and gratefully accepted.

A League donation is a great birthday or holiday gift or as a memorial.

This month generous gifts were received in memory of Vicki Haas and Bob Merrill from Walt Shubin, Joan Lipton and Francine Farber

**Make checks out to LWVF
1345 Bulldog Lane
Fresno, CA 93710**

thank
you!

Voter Services

by Marianne Kast



During the June 7th Consolidated Primary Election, about 40 League volunteers completed nearly 350 hours of work for the Fresno County Elections Department. Many thanks to all who helped out. Rest now; November is coming!

Looking ahead to the coming months, we will surely register students at local colleges and high schools, but is there more we should be doing to improve the dismal voter turnout in our county? How can we get all who are registered to actually vote? Do you have ideas about what else we could be doing? Give me a call or email your ideas for engaging more voters.

At the LWVUS National Convention which I attended in June, much emphasis was placed on following up with newly registered voters to be sure they actually vote. Several suggestions were made to retain contact information when registering voters, and to gather data to advertise the success of the League in both registering voters and getting them out to vote. Further, the Convention amended the LWV bylaws to lower the age for membership (from 18) to 16 years old, suggesting that all registrants be considered as potential League members.

We have been contacted by some organizations who would like the League's help to understand the numerous ballot measures expected on the November ballot.

Thank you, Voter Services volunteers!

Patsy Anderson, Ruth Affi, Janet Baker, Cleo Bauer, Kay Bertken, Medsie Bolin, Mike Bolin, Lisa Bryant, Adua Buticci, Pat Campbell, Francine Farber, Murray Farber, Katherine Ferdolage, Linda Geiss, Sue Goldman, Nancy Greisser, Diane Hanzlicek, Margaret Johnson, Terry Johnson, Sara Kast, Hanna Krebs, Breanna Kriss, Bill Murphy, Carolyn Murphy, Dolores O'Neal, Dominic Pagnani, Charlotte Pavelko, Liz Shields, Helen Siporin, Judi Steele, Sue Strauss, Trudi Thom, Marsha Wagner, Jennifer Williamson, Sylvia Woodburne, Jane Worsley, Nyla Zender

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



A week prior to the June Behavioral Health Board (BHB) meeting, members toured the Fresno County jail to learn more about the treatment of inmates with mental illnesses. Medical care in the jail and at the Juvenile Justice Campus is the responsibility of the Department of Public Health, which contracts with Corizon Health Services to provide this care. Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) provides over \$3 million for mental health treatment and services.

DBH Director Dawan Utecht provided an update on the services provided to jail inmates with mental illnesses. She also provided information and plans for the new jail, which has an expected completion date of 2019. Dave Pomaville, Director of DPH, and Kevin Doods, from Corizon Health, also spoke to the BHB and answered questions. Concerns expressed by the BHB included length of time between intake and assessments, wait time for seeing a psychiatrist and prescriptions for medication, and the housing of inmates with mental illnesses in isolation cells. DBH, DPH, and Corizon are continuing to work on improvements in all areas of care.

The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) (Proposition 63) provides funds for mental health services, and requires input from community stakeholders each year; therefore, DBH has begun the MHSA Community Planning Process, and will hold focus groups throughout the county during the next two months. At the BHB meeting, time was set aside for a focus group, including board members and those in attendance. The concern verbalized repeatedly at this meeting was the lack of knowledge within the community about behavioral health services available and how to access those services.

League members are encouraged to provide input about needed mental health services by going to the DBH-MHSA web site.



Considering the Herculean task before us of making universal health care affordable, we now have another warning shot saying how hard this will be. Consider the reaction to the recent announcement by the Innovation Center of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) that it was moving forward with a pilot program to change certain payments for physicians.

Medication for Profit?

Central to this payment issue is this question: should doctors make money from their prescriptions? Most states permit physicians' offices to dispense medications for profit, under varying but generally strict regulations. Few physicians do this because of the complexities of stocking, accounting, and dealing with prescription benefit plans. Nevertheless, the provision of robot pharmacies to physician offices has become a growth industry, promising 25 to 30 percent increases in office income. Early in my career I fantasized about having my own robot pharmacy, dispensing only the 30 or so medications that I prescribed for rheumatology patients. My reasons: convenience for patients, better quality assurance and patient counseling, and perfect records of medication fills.

These advantages are compromised by the ethical dangers of clinicians' benefiting from changing practice strategies to increase prescription income. The same ethical dangers are inherent in in-office lab and imaging procedures. A 1990 study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* showed that doctors who offered in-office imaging ordered four times as many imaging studies as doctors without imaging machinery—and charged more for the services.

Payment for infusible drugs

One very important arena where perverse incentives may inflate health care costs is the Medicare B infusible/injectable drug payment system. This program originated in the need to provide outpatient cancer chemotherapy, but has expanded to include infusions for a variety of genetic and autoimmune disorders. In 2015, Medicare Part

B spent \$20 billion on outpatient drugs bought, administered, and billed by physicians and hospital infusion departments. These drug costs are escalating exponentially, ironically because cures are rare and the drugs often are given chronically. The overall profit margin for physicians, on drugs alone, was 16%, even though Medicare pays only a 6% overhead above average drug prices, based on the best data obtainable by CMS. This is because of lower contract prices offered to physicians, especially those in group practice with high volumes, by pharmaceutical marketers. Physicians operating infusion centers can make lots of money from selling the drugs they infuse.

Pilot program to reduce overhead

Does this influence doctor's decisions to provide infusion therapy? Does it lead to the overuse of high-cost medications, which under the current system yield higher income for the doctors? The Innovation Center has designed a clever pilot program to answer these questions. The program will reduce the overhead payment to 2.5% of the drug cost while keeping the infusions units' overall income from drug sales "revenue neutral" by adding a standard fee for *all* infusions. The 2.5% figure comes very close to the actual cost of obtaining, storing, discarding, and documenting the drugs. The pilot program intends neither to penalize nor excessively reward the use of high-cost drugs. The program is prepared to adjust payments based on regional needs and changes in drug costs. It is planning to offer reduced copays for Medicare recipients without supplemental coverage, who are now stuck with impossible 20% copays.

The important news about this logical experiment has been the explosion of vehement opposition, not just from physician specialty groups, pharmaceutical companies, and patient advocacy organizations, but also from over 100 legislators from both sides of the aisle who have issued formal statements of alarm at the Innovation Center's modest proposal.

THE HEAT'S ON, SO YOU KNOW IT'S TIME FOR THE



ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Tuesday, August 23 * 7– 9 p.m.

- ◆ **LOTS OF ICE CREAM**
- ◆ **PETERSON SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS**
- ◆ **WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY AWARD** to Deborah Ikeda,
retiring president, Clovis Community College
- ◆ **SILENT AUCTION**

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- ◆ **Art**

The Ice Cream Social will be held at the home of Francine and Murray Farber

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Directions: Shaw to Fruit

South on Fruit for two blocks to Fairmont

West on Fairmont for one block

House is on corner of Fairmont and Delno with lots of on-street parking

Please enter through gate to right of front door

Natural Resources

by Mary Savala



Building Healthy Community (BHC) members, including LWV sent a letter to the mayor and city council asking for commitments in the Fresno City 2016-2017 budget for \$500,000 for an Industrial Compatibility Assessment for the City. The assessment would be an analysis of land uses that are compatible with industrial uses with the least impacts of air and water pollution, noise, dust, and lighting on adjacent, less intensive land uses such as commercial and residential. Mayor Swearingin said she was in support of rolling over \$100,000 from the current 2015-16 commitment toward the assessment.

The letter also requested \$3,000,000 additional funding from the General Fund committed to the PARCS Department to demonstrate that the city has a genuine concern for green space creation and parks maintenance.

Support for biking, walking

The letter asked for \$250,000 to implement the City's Active Transportation Program Plan. This plan will prioritize basic infrastructure needs to support walking and biking in Fresno, including Fresno's most disadvantaged neighborhoods. The mayor has responded that there will be very little in the budget for parks as the City committed improvement funds for southeast and southwest parks which have not yet been spent.

Request for Boomerang Funds

BHC has made affordable, safe and healthy housing a part of its program, so we will try to keep our members informed on their housing positions and action. BHC has asked for 50% of RDA Boomerang funds that the City anticipates receiving in 2017 to create an Afford-

able Housing Trust Fund. The city currently has no local sources of funding for affordable housing. With the dissolution of Redevelopment Agencies (RDA), local jurisdictions lost their most significant source of local funding for affordable homes. Some Bay Area affordable housing developers report that over 75% of their recent projects involved RDA funding. A portion of those former tax increment funds come back to local jurisdictions as both a one-time lump sum and an ongoing bump to their property tax. Counties receive such funds from each former development agency within the county. These have been referred to as "Boomerang Funds".

Health and safety hazards in southwest Fresno

A steering committee has been working on a plan to address overconcentration of industrial uses in southwest Fresno, and the continuing disproportionate zoning for industrial facilities, agricultural uses, solid waste facilities, hazardous waste sites and other polluting land uses. Southwest Fresno neighborhoods are among the top 5% of most impacted communities in the state. Current land-use patterns in West Fresno pose a significant hazard to human health and safety.

It appears that the city is moving forward with the Southwest Specific Land Use Plan without addressing industrial uses despite the repeated requests of West Fresno residents to address disproportionate pollution burdens. West Fresno residents are united and adamant about no more industrial siting, while development and business interests on the committee want light industrial uses. The consultant has not defined "light industrial uses" and residents fear that means warehouses with multiple daily heavy trucks through and in southwest Fresno neighborhoods. "Light industrial uses" are being promoted as creating jobs. However, data on local job creation in southwest Fresno shows that only 10% of jobs are held in the local community, and 90% of existing employment comes from outside the area.

Education

by Kay Bertken



Next FUSD Board Meetings
The Board is in recess until August.

The Board has passed the district budget and Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) for 2016-2017. The budget allocated the entirety of the District's resources, including grants, general funding as well as supplemental/concentration funds targeting at risk populations of foster youth, homeless, English Learners and poverty-level students.

The LCAP, informed by dozens of community meetings, described the particular use of the supplemental funds. The LCAP is available to read on the district website. Trustee Ashjian voted against the budget and LCAP because he said they failed to meet the requests of his district. Trustee Mills abstained because of an undefined legal concern.

Funds expand programs

The budget allocates a large amount of money to implement the new teacher and staff contracts and the recommendations of the English Language Learner Task Force, a substantial increase in school-site allocations by individual school site councils, and summer school expansion, more social workers for foster youth, investments in field trips, contracts with

the Fresno Police Department for more uniformed personnel on

campuses, expanded hours at ten more schools to bring the total with a longer school day to 40, and professional learning for teachers, among many other things.

New pools at two high schools

One time funds included in the state budget will go to new textbook series, security cameras, lighting, painting schools, and new pools at Roosevelt and McLane, the last of the high schools to have their swimming pools redone.

Trustee Mills and Ashjian expressed unhappiness that the priorities of their areas—specifically career technical education, disruptive students and safety-- were not appropriately addressed. Trustee Ashjian proposed that because his district was the provider of Proposition 30 funding, "which saved education in the state," the district needed to "feed the trough." The two trustees, who had previously questioned the addition of a full time Hmong language teacher at their schools, did not speak on the issue at the budget vote.

More staffing requested

The FTA called for smaller class sizes, which were not an explicit

part of the budget. One member of the public complained that the ratio of social workers for foster youth was not low enough, although the district does now meet the standards for school-based social workers. Student groups proposed a standing student committee to advise the district on the supplemental funding plans.

In a special workshop before its last meeting of the year, the Board heard the results of a public opinion survey to assess the prospects of a new facilities bond measure on the November ballot. The survey showed very positive reactions across all demographics and in all areas of the district. The Board will vote on a specifically worded bond proposal when it reconvenes in August.

Graduation rate improves

The happy news at the end of the year was the announcement of a 2015 graduation rate of 83.8%, a percentage that was above the state average and that represented big increases in all subgroups of students. In addition the early indicators are of another high graduation rate this year.

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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. 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

Please send your check payable to the League of Women Voters, Fresno, with registration form (below), to: LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Suite 4, Fresno, CA 93710.

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