



# The Fresno VOTER

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### Calendar

**July 12 : Annual Retreat and July Board Meeting 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Home of Francine Farber, 707 West Fairmont Ave., Fresno. All are welcome.**

**Aug.13: Board Meeting League Office. 5 p.m.**

**August 18: Ice Cream Social 7 p.m. Home of the Williamsons (see flyer) Please attend and bring a guest to hear Sheriff Margaret Mims.**

**Sept. 5 Elder Women's Speak-Out 9:30- 2 p.m. Big Red Church—see article for details.**

## COUNTY BUDGET HEARING AIRS CONCERNS

By Murray Farber 226-5455

A chorus in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penance* laments: "A Policeman's Lot is Not A Happy One." Precarious job security makes that lot even less happy. So it was not surprising that about half of the 100-plus attendees at Supervisor Henry Perea's June 11 town hall budget meeting, held in the First Congregational Church Hall, were the county's policemen: Deputy Sheriffs.



**Perea insisted that budget money would be shifted from other areas to ensure that no deputy would lose his job,** but that didn't stop one rookie officer from pleading for even more reassurance.

*The Fresno Bee* tells us that although **the County's proposed budget is \$1.7 billion, the County Supervisors have discretionary power over only \$350 million of that amount.** Legal requirements mandate how the balance is spent. We understand that competition for those discretionary dollars will be fierce.

But seeing the faces and the people fighting for funding made attending the meeting, more meaningful.

**The greatest impact came from the determined pleas for more money from department heads** such as District Attorney Elizabeth Egan, who explained that while her prosecutors are the lowest paid in the state, they handle the state's heaviest caseload. Now Egan faces a cutback of \$2.4 million.

Dr. Edward Moreno, the County Health Director, said he needed \$8 million more just to match this year's services. Instead he will get \$3.5 million less. This may force him to cut 72 positions and eliminate some programs including the children's dental service, which provides a van to visit schools and conducts oral health education for 6,000 pupils.

The litany continued: the county provided employment services to almost 10,000 welfare-to-work residents and issued \$170 million in food stamp benefits to 47,000 families. Budget cuts will reduce these services just when they are most needed.

See BUDGET, page 4

## it's official!!!

**The redistricting initiative has qualified to be on the ballot in November, 2008. Thanks to all who sent in petitions.**

## You made it successful.

## *President's Message*

Just when you are sure nothing can go wrong, along comes fate and throws a low punch to push you off the track. So it was with the Mayoral Forum on Poverty.

Dolores O'Neal and I had been meeting for months with a committee representing diverse non-profit groups throughout Fresno to plan this forum for all the candidates for mayor of the City of Fresno. The whole undertaking was funded through a generous grant from The California Endowment to Fresno Works for Better Health Coalition, a non-profit organization dedicated to alleviating concentrated poverty in Fresno's most severely impacted neighborhoods. Fresno Works had hired a consulting firm to lead the committee through the steps necessary to put on a large event.

The Forum was originally scheduled to be held in April, 2008. At that time there were seven candidates for mayor, which was daunting enough, but when this number quickly grew to eleven, the committee decided to hold the forum immediately after the primary election so that the public could concentrate on the two-run-off candidates and learn about their visions, plans and differences from each other.

The date of June 12 at the Saroyan Theater from 5 to 8 p.m. was selected. Questions were developed for the moderator, a reactor panel comprised of the current mayor and Bee columnist Bill McEwen was recruited, and a timekeeper was in place. The event was publicized to thousands of committee members through e-mail and media. We breathed a sigh of relief as the last week approached.

Late on June 4 it was learned that the Fresno City Council was having a budget hearing on the allocation of Community Development Block Grants at 4:00 p.m. on June 12. Originally it had been listed for 8:30 a.m. but was moved to the afternoon. This agenda item is sometimes controversial, and always evokes lengthy discussion. The timing meant that Councilman Henry T. Perea, one of the two run-off candidates for mayor, would be unable to attend the forum since he would be at the CDBG discussion. Despite our pleas, the Council was unable to alter the order of the agenda. We regretfully decided to postpone the forum.

The Forum consultant contacted The California Endowment since their representatives had planned to fly here to be present at the Forum. The Endowment immediately requested that the League of Women Voters be called upon to contact the other candidate to determine whether she agreed with the postponement of the Forum. They asked for the League's involvement specifically because of our national reputation for fairness and non-partisanship. Several hours later I was able to connect with Ashley Swearingen and she immediately agreed to set a new date for the event.

Perhaps it will work out for the best. We are planning on a post-Labor Day Forum and will notify the public once specific plans are re-set. Who knows? The public may have recovered from its voter burnout by then and may be energized by the coming presidential election as well, so that we can expect a huge turnout. We hope to see you at the Saroyan.

*Francine*

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# Three Alternative Plans Presented at SEGA Workshop

By John R. Donaldson 291-3818

The Southeast Growth Area (SEGA) covers 14 square miles in two chunks whose corners touch at the intersection of Jensen and Temperance Avenues. The first area stretches from the Gould Canal (north of Shields) south to Jensen and from Temperance east to Highland. The second area extends from Jensen south to North Ave. and from Temperance west to Minnewawa.

On June 10 the City of Fresno along with its partnering agencies, advisory committees, and Calthorpe Associates presented three alternative plans for the development of this area. The event was held at the Convention Center New Exhibit Hall.

**Plan 1** assumes that growth continues as it has to date, filling in the entire area out to the Sanger Sphere of Influence. Although hundreds attended the workshop, only a

few indicated that they preferred Plan 1, and only one resident spoke in favor of this plan.



**Plans 2 and 3** are very similar, with continued rural residential areas where they already exist, but with new development clustered and connected by dedicated trail and bikeways. The plans make provision for industrial and mixed use, but with a considerably higher density than is currently practiced. Almost everyone would be within a ten minute walk to a Community Center, Neighborhood Center, or Regional Center. Schools would be easily accessible. The main transportation corridors would be Kings Canyon Road

and Clovis Avenue, with Jensen, Temperance, and McKinley as secondary routes.

After the plans were presented the audience was asked to go upstairs and go through a set of rooms, each centering on a particular aspect of the plan: transportation, mixed use, etc. The attendees were asked to vote by placing dots on a variety of posters. Staff guides were present to answer questions and to discuss specifics. The program concluded with attendees voting for Plan 1, 2, or 3. The votes were not tabulated during the meeting, but Plan 2 appeared to be leading. It differed from Plan 3 mostly in that the industrial uses were distributed more widely and to some extent surrounded residential uses.

This observer found that the event presented the most audacious, forward-looking planning that I have seen anywhere. Congratulations to Fresno Planning Director Nick Yovino, Calthorpe Associates and all the others involved in the process. SEGA should fit well into the Blue Print Process.

## JOIN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS AND BECOME A TV STAR

Voter Services Vice President Liz Shields was featured on Jim Tucker's Friday evening Valley Press show on Channels 8 and 18 recently. She discussed Proposition 99 and the League's support for this initiative having to do with eminent domain. Prop 99 was victorious in the recent elections.

Brand new member Jul Lowery found herself on TV unexpectedly when she volunteered to work on the County Elections Office telephone bank on Election Day. Shortly after she began her first-ever stint along with Liz Shields

and Jane Worsley, Channel 47 appeared and decided she would make a good subject. They bypassed Liz and Jane, who have been volunteering for years at the Elections Office, and thrust the microphone in front of Jul. "How long had she been doing this sort of work," they asked her. "About fifteen minutes," was her honest answer.



## **BUDGET**, continued from page 1

The grim situation grew worse as the audience responded. **The deputies warned that the impending reduction in detectives would impact their ability to fight agricultural and street crimes, to answer calls for help and to deal with expected early jail releases.**

**Supporters of assistance for mental health programs were almost as vocal as those championing law enforcement.** Speakers noted that 58 positions and several rural clinic sites are slated for elimination; in addition, the county is not able to pay for psychotropic medication. **Addressing the issue, NAMI officer and League member Helen Siporin warned there are “4,000 severely psychotic, raving maniacs” and others who need their medications.** “If we don’t raise people to be healthy, we won’t have enough jails.”

At this meeting, no one came forward to complain about wasted dollars, already- high taxes or to suggest reductions. Clearly, Fresno County lacks the resources of the upscale coastal communities in securing more revenue through real estate or sales tax increases. That poverty, in turn, leads to more crime as well as physical and mental health

The county supervisors will be challenged to meet competing needs. If you were a Supervisor, where would you cut or add? There will be further meetings hearings to provide residents with the opportunity to understand the budget or to offer their own comments.

**Perhaps, the lot of Supervisors is not a happy one.**

## **Mental Health**

By Jul Lowery 476-0010

Effort to close the county budget shortfall will result in significant cuts to mental health funding. While the county plan released in June contains cuts to most county services, the effects on mental health programs will have extensive consequences for those who rely on them.

**Proposed staff reductions impact not only employees but consumers. For many people with chronic mental illness, their relationship with clinicians and staff become lifelines to solving life problems such as finding housing, learning how to live with their illness and developing social and occupational skills.** Building stable relationships creates trust and facilitates recovery. And for some whose illness pre-

vents them from v managing their medications accurately, regular meetings with staff are essential in avoiding relapse.

Budget cuts may result in the closure of some rural clinics. This means that getting routine treatment, as well as managing crises will become more difficult.

Another potential change may be the discontinuance of payment for adult patients, even though an uninterrupted medication regime is essential for managing chronic mental illness. It is unclear how this service gap will be filled or whether other resources are available to fill this need.

**An adequate level of mental health services can reduce hospitalizations and emergency room visits, resulting in lower overall expenditures for mental health care.** This is one of the arguments for adequate mental health funding. Another is the effectiveness of community based treatment in increasing independence and quality of life.

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## **PLANNING UNDERWAY FOR ELDER WOMEN’S INITIATIVE**

By Francine M. Farber 226-5455

By 2030, one out of every six Californians will be 65 or older. Since women live longer and are more likely to be widowed or live alone, they are more vulnerable to economic insecurity during retirement. The disparities that girls and women , particularly those of color or limited English skills,, experience throughout their lives are only exacerbated as they age.

The Women’s Foundation of California is partnering with The California Endowment and other agencies to develop the new Elder Women’s Initiative. I attended a Local Planning Committee meeting this month as LWVF representative in preparation for a full day town hall style meeting in September called a “Speak-Out.” Speak-Outs will also be held in Oakland and Los Angeles, but Fresno’s will be the first such event.

The Speak-Outs will bring together policy makers with elder women and their allies to talk about the issues they face and discuss the assets they and their communities have to offer . Many of these issues came to light at the LPC  
See ELDER WOMEN’S INITIATIVE, page 6

# Legislation Report

By Terri Figgs 431-7274

## Health Care – SB 840

The Legislative Analyst's Office reviewed SB 840 and found that a single payer plan reduces health care spending and contains annual growth. SB 840, now awaiting a hearing in the Assembly Appropriations Committee, does not contain details concerning taxes, premiums, expenses or other financial matters, but rather constructs a Blue Ribbon Panel, made up of statewide officers, to research and propose the actual funding mechanism and put it out for a vote of the people, along with the entire health insurance plan. This is made necessary by the fact that any change to state revenues that increases revenues (even though all premiums for single payer would take the place of all premiums, co-pays and deductibles now paid by those who are insured) must garner a two-thirds vote in both houses.

## LWVC Plan for Action on November Ballot Measures

The LWVC is already on record as an advocate for the **California Voters FIRST redistricting initiative**, and expects that the measure will qualify for the November ballot. Plans are underway to organize local Leagues to be ready for an intensive advocacy campaign, including seeking local endorsements, writing letters to the editor, training for speakers bureau, radio and TV interviews, and preparing op-ed pieces. **Redistricting will be the LWVC top priority for the November election.**

The LWVC board decided to oppose the "Waiting Period and Parental Notification Before Termination of Minor's Pregnancy" initiative, which the board believes will also qualify for the ballot. If asked, LWVC will sign the ballot argument against the measure, and will be listed in campaign literature, but in light of the emphasis on redistricting reform, LWVC's efforts will be limited primarily to passing along campaign information for local Leagues to use.

## Qualified for November 2008 Ballot

- **Safe, Reliable High-Speed Passenger Train Bond for the 21st Century**
- **Treatment of Farm Animals**
- **Children's Hospital Bond Act, Grant Program**

## From the Planning and Conservation League Newsletter:

### Proposal to Fund State Parks

To keep state parks off the budget chopping block and put them on the path to financial stability while expanding visiting opportunities, John Laird, Chairman of the Assembly Budget Committee, unveiled the California State Park Access Plan.

The measure would raise \$282 million per year by replacing park entrance fees with an annual ten dollar surcharge as part of the California vehicle licensing fee, guaranteeing free year-long access to all state parks.

### Schwarzenegger Declares Drought Emergency

Governor Schwarzenegger announced that California is officially in a two-year drought and issued an Executive Order directing the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and other agencies to implement an eight point drought response plan, including heightened water efficiency, more water transfers, and updated drought planning. He also called for an \$11.9 billion bond that would fund new dams.

Four of the eight points in the drought plan focus on water efficiency. The Governor also revived calls for a multi-billion dollar water bond for the November 2008 ballot which would direct billions of dollars to expensive new dams. Despite millions of dollars in studies, DWR has failed to show that these dams are feasible under existing environmental conditions, let alone California's altered hydrology from global warming. The bond's future is uncertain given its expensive price tag, the controversial projects it would support, and the State's current fiscal crisis.

### Senate Debate on Global Warming Ends

The United States Senate failed to muster enough votes to proceed with consideration of the Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act, a bill that would establish a national Cap and Trade program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Forty-eight Senators voted to support taking up the measure, falling short of the two-thirds threshold required to overcome a filibuster.

See LEGISLATURE, page 6

**LEGISLATURE**, continued from page 5

Larry Schweiger, president and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation, expressed dismay at the small pool of Senators who continue to resist even a discussion of climate legislation. "How could any senator vote against advancing debate on global warming legislation? What were they thinking? If we don't tackle climate change soon, it will tackle us. It's that simple."

**Senate Committee Approves Nichols for Top CARB Seat**

The Senate Rules Committee confirmed the appointment of Mary Nichols to chair the California Air Resources Board (CARB). The full Senate is expected to approve the committee's decision in the near future.

Nichols faces a series of high-pressure decisions in the coming months. In October, the CARB board members are scheduled to approve a statewide greenhouse gas emission reduction Scoping Plan, detailing how California's emissions will be reduced to 1990 levels by 2020 in compliance with the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006. They will also soon vote on an On-Road Diesel Rule addressing the toxic emissions that cause severe cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses, asthma attacks, cancer, and premature death.

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**Natural Resources**

By Mary Savala 431-1227

**Measure C**

The June 12th Oversight Committee was cancelled for the second time due to lack of agenda material. Grapevine has it that sales tax revenues for Measure C were estimated very conservatively and so revenues from Measure C sales tax to date are close to what was anticipated.

Taxi script program for seniors - \$100.00 script per month cost to seniors of \$25.00 per month. - program could start as early as July.

Development Impact Mitigation Fees are still being studied. Regional road and highway projects cannot proceed until a fee schedule is agreed on and adopted by the cities and County.

**Land Buffer Task Force**

The County Task Force commissioned by the Board of Supervisors met to receive a report on the Model Farm Land Conservation Program and to discuss questions on buffers between the south eastern cities in Fresno County. Questions addressed by subgroups of the task force and the audience consisted on what kinds of land uses were appropriate in buffers, how wide should buffers be, how to establish buffers, how long should buffers exist, and who should determine their duration and uses. In its next meeting, the Task Force will move on to questions of melding the Model Farm Land Conservation Committee and the Buffer Task Force and questions of policy conflicts with other land use buffer policies in Fresno County, i.e. dairies, and wild life habitat.

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**ELDER WOMEN**, continued from page 4

meeting as about twenty representatives form ethnically diverse groups shared concerns and ideas.

The long-term outcome of this project is the development of an advocacy training program for older women that equips grassroots organizers to articulate policy goals, to mobilize constituencies and to lobby successfully for systems change that will improve the quality of life of older women and their families. One important goal is to create policies that enable women to age in their own homes with dignity and economic security.

The Fresno Speak-Out will be held on Friday, September 5 from 9:30 to 2 p.m. at the First Congregational Church, 2131 N. Van Ness Boulevard in Fresno. Interpreter services, childcare and lunch will be provided. Online registration will open July 1 at [www.womensfoundca.org](http://www.womensfoundca.org).

# EDUCATION REPORT

By Kay Bertken 226-2720

While the State of California has still not passed its budget, the Trustees of FUSD presented their 2008-2009 budget on June 4, a budget reflecting projected large state funding reductions and an anticipated further enrollment decline of 1,900 students. **Fresno Unified is anticipating a \$12.4 million dollar decrease in Unrestricted General Fund revenue as well as several million dollars worth of decreases in categorical funding.** The few funding increases include state special education funds (up \$1.1 million) and increases in ongoing federal program revenue (up \$1.4 million).

The District is balancing its budget by drawing down the General Fund reserve by \$7 million, reducing Central Office budgets by 8% and realizing operational savings from their Worker's Compensation program that will allow a reduction of that rate. **The Trustees were proud that the District was one of the few in the state not laying off teachers or cutting programs and was increasing allocations for instructional supplies and safety related services. The budget was approved at the Board meeting on June 18.**

District staff reported at the June 4 Board meeting on the progress in responding to last year's Safety Commission recommendations. Improvements have included increased numbers of school security assistants and 380 video cameras at high school and middle school sites. The District has also centralized the security functions of the district under a Safety Director and two assistants. A safety team made up of school administrators meets once a month to review safety issues and an enhanced incident reporting and general data management system facilitates targeted interventions.

Fresno Unified Board of Trustee meetings have been relatively short and relatively free of controversy since the settlement of the teacher contract and the assumption of the Board presidency by Trustee Tony Vang. The November 2008 election involves a contest between the incumbent, longtime Trustee Manuel Nunez and Larry Moore, recently the leader of the Fresno Teachers Association.

**Of note at the previous meeting was a discussion of a vocational education initiative for the west Fresno Edison high school pyramid of schools, including the elementary schools, Computech and the new west Fresno middle school, once it is built.** The S.U.C.C.E.E.D. program is envisioned as a K-13 program for technical vocational education and training that incorporates career awareness education at the elementary level, general employment and skill training at the middle school and first high school years, and specific skill training in technical occupations in grades 11 through 13. Fresno Unified is partnering with UC Merced and Fresno Community College. The latter is planning a facility near Edison High. **Training will be focused on all levels of technical jobs, from installation and repair of equipment to programming. Industries include telecommunications and alternative energy as well as**



**information technology.** The program will be piloted in west Fresno, with the hope of adaptation to the rest of the District. Edison is currently without any vocational education options.

The discussion of the S.U.C.C.E.E.D. program included the Board reiterating its commitment to building a middle school in West Fresno. Plans for that school will be incorporated in the comprehensive Master Facilities Plan that is scheduled to be completed in the fall. That plan will be proposing solutions to the District-wide problems of overcrowded schools and several underutilized schools that are spread around the district. It will also document the individual school repairs and upgrades that are necessary to accommodate our students and educational programs for the next decades. Boundary changes and a school bond measure are undoubtedly in the district's near future.

## New Preschool Research Shows Improvement Needed

By Kay Bertken 226-2720

A recent report by the Rand Corporation provides important ammunition for the drive to improve preschool education in California. Rand collected data on preschool attendance by three and four year olds as well as interviews with preschool providers and site visits to a number of center-based preschools (non-private home settings).

**Seventy-five percent of three and four year olds in California are in some sort of regular day ECE (early childhood education) setting, but those groups of children who typically enter kindergarten with large deficits in school readiness are the least likely to be enrolled.** Family income, ethnic status and language status are all related to participation rates. Latino children are the least likely to participate of all ethnic groups. Children of poverty, children who speak Spanish in the home and children of mothers with low levels of educational attainment are less likely to participate than their peers. **Those children who are most likely to benefit from high quality ECE programs are the least likely to be in them.**



In examining the quality of center-based programs available in California, the study found them to be generally high scoring (an average of 5.3 and 5.5 on a 1 to 7 scale) in providing emotional support and engaging their students. The centers scored much less well in enhancing their students' school readiness by teaching higher order thinking and language skills (an average score of 2.6).

A link to the full report is available at the website:

[preschoolcalifornia.org/rand-study/](http://preschoolcalifornia.org/rand-study/)

That site also provides a link for sending messages to State representatives to encourage attention to expanded and improved preschool opportunities.



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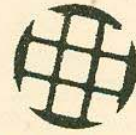
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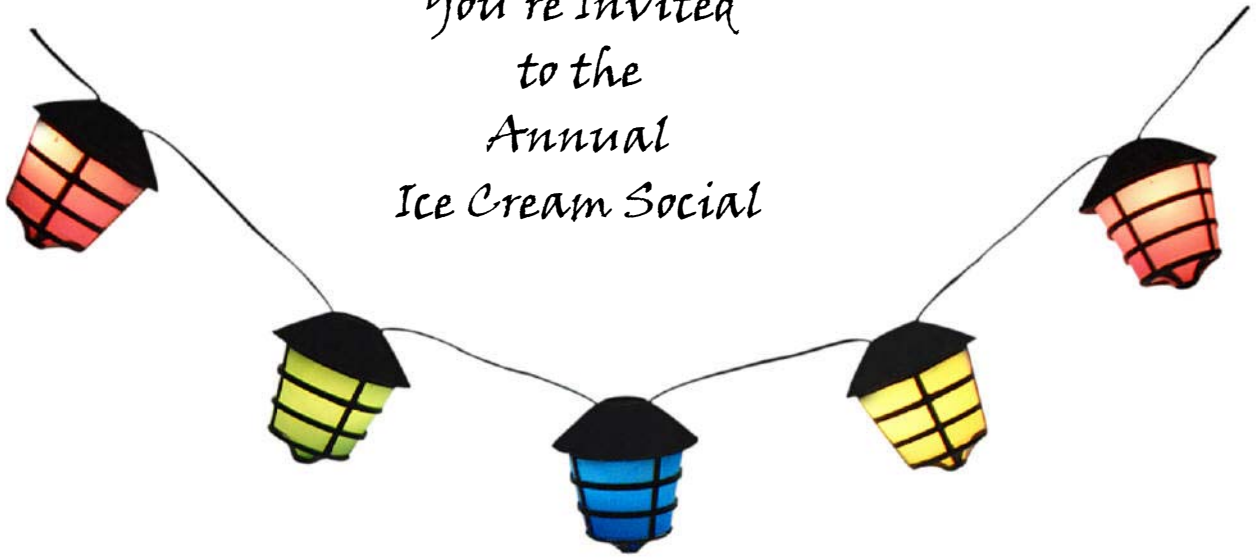
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