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The *Fresno* **VOTER**



Incentives for medical digital records encourage positive change

by Dr. Richard Bertken

We need to recognize that computers in healthcare don't simply replace my doctor's scrawl with Helvetica 12. Instead, they transform the work, the people who do it, and their relationships with each other and with patients.

So writes Dr. Robert Wachter in his popular new book, *The Digital Doctor*. While embracing these transformations, Wachter also tells cautionary tales of computers' capacities for colossal error and for routine interference with medical care. Dr. Eric Topol's *The Creative Destruction of Medicine* and *The Patient Will See You Now* present unabashed enthusiasm for the "democratizing" changes in health care that information technology (IT) is driving. These books attest the belated arrival of IT to the hallowed halls of medicine and its potential for enabling positive change.

The most important potential lies in facilitating genuine health systems, wherein a shared electronic health record (EHR) promotes clearly defined roles and goals for core care (the primary care physician or group, now also known as the "primary medical home"), the specialties, the allied health professions, and the patients themselves. The key element in the system is rapid, secure doctor-to-doctor and doctor-to-patient communication of EHR information.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA), recognizing the opportunity afforded by digital records and communications, allocated a billion dollars to create the Innovation Center as a department of the Center for Medicare/Medicaid Services. An early program to attack Medicare costs was the fostering of potentially cost-controlling health systems known as accountable care organizations, or ACO's. The Pioneer ACO program, with health systems still using fee-for-service funding but more coordinated care, was launched in 2012. Participating networks achieve spending

(continued on page 5)

Tuesday, June 23
Regular Board Meeting
5 p.m., League Office

Friday, July 10
Annual Retreat
Home of Francine Farber
707 West Fairmont, Fresno

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

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

President's Message



The theme of the LWVC Convention in San Diego last month was “Let the Sun Shine In”, which was a bit ironic considering we got a fair amount of clouds and rain.

The convention featured several excellent speakers; many workshops and caucuses, some of which were educational and others urging advocacy; and plenary sessions where all of the business matters were addressed.

Some interesting decisions that were made included a change from an annual to a biennial budget and raising the PMP by \$2.50, to \$25.50, for 2015-16 and another \$2.50, to \$28, for 2016-17. The increase stimulated a lot of discussion and consequently the budget committee scheduled two Q & A's that answered most of the questions and concerns of the delegates.

In April our League (primarily Diane Merrill) wrote an excellent letter on water issues to the state board indicating our concerns that the agriculture and water positions might need to be updated to reflect current conditions at the next convention. The letter outlined specific issues and gave recommendations on how the positions could be changed to be more useful in advocacy for agriculture and water issues.

The LWVC board was impressed and immediately wanted someone from our board represented on the LWVC Water Committee. Diane Merrill will assume that position. We distributed copies of the letter to all delegates at the convention and were asked to discuss it at the Water Caucus.

A strong theme of Civic Discourse emerged as the convention progressed. It was the theme for the banquet speaker and in the remarks from the LWVUS President. It was also the topic of a very well attended workshop. The message was that times are changing. Demographics are changing. The League must recognize this and change as well. Everyone needs to feel they are being heard and we can be good listeners and have successful discourse with young people and people of various colors, languages and cultures. Our message, however, does not need to change. It translates very well.

Nyla

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Volume 74, No. 6 Editor: Francine Farber

Member News

Please note changes in your roster



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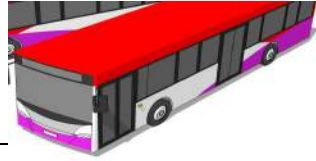
April, 2016

Want to help?

Have some suggestions?

Call Francine

2266-5455



Every two years Fresno Area Express (FAX) prepares a Short Range Transit Plan to update basic operating and capital plans.

The plan includes both FAX and Clovis Transit because the two systems work closely together in what is one urban area. FAX consists of a standard bus system and Handy Ride, a demand-response service for senior and disabled travelers. The bus system has fourteen routes whose week-day operation requires 180 drivers. This profile will change somewhat when Bus Rapid Transit begins service along the Blackstone and Ventura-Kings Canyon corridors in 2016. FAX owns 109 buses for its standard service, and 48 para-transit vans for Handy Ride.

Rider Survey Results

In a recent survey, riders gave FAX an overall grade of B+. Weekend bus operations received the lowest grade, C+. On-time buses, frequency of buses, length of trips, and condition of bus stops received the next lowest grade. Driver helpfulness, skills, and safety received the highest grade, B+, along with proximity of bus stops to homes and destinations.

FAX compares favorably with five transit systems serving cities of comparable area and density. It has by far the most passengers per revenue hour and mile, and the best fare-box recovery (ratio of fare income to total operating expenses).

Needs and Challenges

Despite this favorable comparison, patronage has been declining since 2009, and FAX reports unfunded transit needs and long-term challenges. On the list to do when funding allows are:

- **Extend evening service**
- **Increase service frequency on certain corridors**

- **Add evening and night service**
- **Extend weekend service hours**
- **Extend bus service into all areas of Fresno**
- **Add east-west service on Bullard Avenue**
- **Create campus transit center at CSU Fresno**

Readers may be surprised to learn that FAX has "capacity issues" -- that is, overcrowded buses during peak periods. Overcrowding tends to occur near schools and usually lasts less than two hours in each peak period. FAX has eased overcrowding a little by reducing amount of time between buses to twenty minutes on the overcrowded routes. "Tripper service" -- extra buses during peak periods -- would solve the problem, but funding is not yet available.

Regional and local planners have come to realize that land-use regulators and developers must work together to channel population growth into FAX's existing service area. It is unaffordable to extend traditional transit service far into low-density, car-dependent outlying areas

"Build it -- that is, offer service -- and they will come" is an abandoned mantra. It has been replaced by "Divert them into mixed-use development where service already exists, and they will use it". Rather than trying to extend regular bus service into outlying areas, modern transit can usefully supplement its core service with ridesharing and vanpooling, and under certain circumstances with circulator services at the ends of standard core routes.

So when will we begin to see needed improvements in FAX service?

When there's money. Like every transportation system nationwide, FAX does not have enough financial resources. We'll look at the funding challenges in the next report.



A number of Hmong parents spoke to the Board during open communications at the May 13 Board meeting. They were there with representatives from the Parent Institute for Quality Education and Building Healthy Communities. Each spoke about the need for increased outreach to parents, especially the need for translators at the schools. They specifically proposed using one percent of the new school funding to provide for a position they called the Community Connector at each school. They envision this person as a bridge between families and schools, especially for limited English speaking parents

Budget Discussions

The Board has been engaged almost exclusively in budget discussions for the last months in preparation for a public hearing on the budget on May 27 and final adoption on June 3. So far the staff is recommending increases in funding to expand capacity in early learning programs—expanding some to full day and opening new sites.

They are also recommending expanding restorative justice practices from the McLane area to Edison and Fresno High next year. This year in the McLane region, suspensions are down from 1,548 in '13-'14 to 714 this year. Expulsions are down from 21 to 9. Administrators at McLane High School report the most impressive thing to them is the elimination of repeat offenses.

Fresno Unified serves 764 foster youth and approximately 600 students who are officially designated as homeless. The Department of Prevention and Intervention is proposing hiring four new social workers to provide more intensive case management assistance to these students. More assistance for all struggling stu-

dents was a priority of the community groups who participated in developing the Local Control Accountability Plan. Additional budget proposals include adding staff at the Department of Prevention and Intervention and at the high schools to provide all students with more social-emotional support.

Another of the community priorities was an increased investment in vocational/career opportunities. The staff budget proposals include an additional 1.9 million dollars for various CTE initiatives. Work already underway in the District includes career awareness programs for all elementary school students, college visits in the sixth (community colleges) and seventh grades (4 year colleges), career exploration in the eighth grade, and designated career pathways and courses at each of the comprehensive high schools.

CTE Pathways Supported

Future plans include focusing the various CTE courses that exist on each campus to support the specific pathways at each school. Some money will go to additional staff for the opening of the District's new Entrepreneurship High School behind Radcliff Stadium.

Improvement for English Learners

While no additional funding was proposed for new initiatives for English Learners, the Board heard positive news about improvements in the redesignation rate of their EL students. The current annual rate has increased from 10.3% last year to 14.8% so far this year, with another assessment coming soon that could increase that improvement. In addition, the percent of long term English Learner students (those who have been in the program for 5 or more years without testing out) has declined from 42% in 2011-12 to 31% so far this year.



Voter Services

by Marianne Kast and Mary Perich



In 2014 Governor Brown designated the last two weeks in April and September as High School Voter Education Weeks. It has been gratifying for LWV volunteers to visit government and economics classes in local high schools to present the case for voting, to answer questions about current issues, and then to guide students in completing the voter registration form.

In recent weeks, volunteers Adua Buticci, Sue Goldman, Marianne Kast, Hanna Krebs, Mary Perich and Laura Silberman have registered about 600 students at seven area high schools. Using a power point presentation created by Marianne, questions such as “Why should I vote?” and “Why bother, my vote won’t make a difference?” are addressed. We’ve introduced the students to the website <isidewith.com> where they take a quiz to determine which political party best represents their ideas. We have visited Kerman High School, Gateway, Cart, Clovis West, Clovis

North, Duncan Polytechnic, and Duncan. Our plans are to visit other high schools in September.

We actually had to turn down some requests because we didn’t have enough volunteers on specific days that schools asked for our presentation. One intriguing part of this project is finding the right people at each high school who welcome the presentations and share the belief that registering young people is worth a half-hour or so of class time.

With the primary election coming in June, 2016, schools should be eager to capitalize on the increasing interest in the election, and encourage eligible students to register.

Are you interested in this project? Call Marianne Kast (559)270-7937 to volunteer.

Student Unit by Lisa Bryant

With Fresno State on break for the summer, we are already busy making plans for the fall semester. As mentioned in the last issue of The Voter, the Student Unit developed an online survey to assist the League in developing a position on higher education, focusing on issues such as enrollment, class availability and financial hardship. More to come on that this fall. The Student Unit is also already working to organize a campus voter registration drive in the fall, so we can hit the ground running when students return.

In May the Student Unit President Kristen Herring and member Bailey Baker graduated. Congratulations to Kristen and Bailey and good luck in your future endeavors!

Digital Records (continued from page 1)

below the projected level for their Medicare population split the savings with the government, provided that they also met a set of 33 quality measures. This month CMS released a study of 32 Pioneer ACO’s showing a 4% and 1.4% reduction in Medicare costs in 2012 and 2013 respectively (compared to similar patients outside the ACO’s). Applied to the whole Medicare population, Pioneer ACO’s would save \$380 million yearly. It is encouraging these modest savings were largely attributable to reduced hospitalization costs and that patient satisfaction was superior to the comparison population. CMS is planning a New Generation ACO program that will further incentivize cost and quality controls.

Water News by Mary Savala



LWVF sent a letter to the California League last month expressing our support for a concurrence for minor changes in our state position on Agriculture.

We went on to express our concerns for rapidly emerging issues in agricultural practices and the California drought.

We wrote that we believe the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 is a step in the right direction, but too little and too slow an effort to protect groundwater resources. The time lines in the act should be shortened and the state should take a stronger stance on groundwater management and address land subsidence brought about by ground water depletion.

We believe California's archaic surface water allocations do not

address modern agricultural and urban water needs, and California needs to address inequities in present day water rights laws.

We are also concerned about produced water from oil and gas mining that may contain enough pollutants to contaminate food products and ground water when applied to agricultural lands. Thus we support extensive peer-reviewed studies to assess the short and long term safety of using produced water on crops consumed by humans or livestock.

Lastly, we asked LWVC to give more consideration to the declining water table and its impact on individual well owners, rural communities and small farming operators who cannot afford the cost of drilling new wells. We reminded

LWVC that our league in the Central Valley is at the heart of agriculture and water controversy, and that new information about water law, water resources, global agricultural markets, agricultural economies and potential water pollutants suggests that LWVC needs to take a new and closer look at LWVC Agricultural and Water policies in the very near future.

LWVC responded quickly and seriously to our letter and we believe we have started a process to initiate an update study and committed our League to taking part.

The Public Policy Institute of California is presenting a FREE program on Drought and Groundwater in the San Joaquin Valley on June 4 from 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm at CSU Fresno. Pre-registration is encouraged as space is limited. Details at www.ppic.org

Friant Ranch Update

by Radley Reep

The Friant Ranch lawsuit continues to be litigated in the California Supreme Court. In April and May nine amicus (friend of the court) briefs were filed by outside parties – four in favor of Friant Ranch, four in favor of the League and the Sierra Club, and one offering a neutral position.

Our attorney, Sara Hedgpeth-Harris, has until June 11 to file an answer to those nine briefs. The League has accepted an offer from Susan Brandt-Hawley, an attorney with experience before the Supreme Court, to assist Sara in that task at no cost to the League .

Once Sara's answer to the amicus briefs has been filed with the court, the Supreme Court will set the matter for oral argument. We do not know when oral argument will take place or how long it will take the court to reach a decision. Importantly, once the Supreme Court makes a ruling, we should count on there being one or more follow-up hearings in either the 5th District Court of Appeal or in Fresno County Superior Court.

In a closely related matter, in December the Board of Supervisors allowed Friant Ranch to amend the Friant Ranch EIR. Because we do not know how much progress has been made, we are unable to anticipate when the amended EIR will be ready for public review.

Mental Health

by Francine Farber



The newly minted Behavioral Health Board, which combines the former Mental Health and Alcohol and Drug Boards, had its first meeting at about half capacity recently. The new Board is set up to include 15 members but as of May 19 only eight had been appointed by the supervisors. The hold-up seems to be a reluctance on the part of some officials to appoint representatives to the Board from outside their own districts if they do not receive applications from within their districts. In my case, Supervisor Brian Pacheco was open-minded enough to appoint me from his district 1, even though I live in District 2.

Department Director Dawan Utecht updated the new board on the Adolescent Crisis unit which has been open for more than a month. It is a 16-bed facility

which has accommodated 10 to 13 youth from Fresno, Madera and Tulare counties during that time.

Fresno County is voluntarily participating in the Drug Medi-Cal Redesign program. Although the extent of the redesign is not yet known, one example of a potential change involves enlarging the bed capacities of residential drug treatment centers. Currently they are not allowed to have more than 16 beds. It is also anticipated that methadone treatment centers will be required which is not now the case. The timeline for Fresno County's participation is not yet set but it is anticipated that it will be in the first part of next year.

The new Board elected Joann Cox as its interim chair (she had previously been elected chair of the old Board) until appointments are completed. Ad hoc committees were established to review by-laws and mission and vision statements. Standing committees for Adult Services, Children's Services, Justice and Substance Use Disorders were established and will begin to meet on a regular schedule. The schedule will be published when it is finalized; all meetings are open to the public.

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- ◆ Scholarship Winners from FCC and Fresno State
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