



Phone: 559-226-VOTE

Web site:
<http://fresno.ca.lwvnet.org>

The Fresno VOTER



Monday, June 19
Regular Board Meeting
League Office, 5 p.m.

Monday, July 10 (date change)
Regular Board Meeting
League Office, 5 p.m.

Friday, August 18
Board Annual Retreat
Members Invited
Central Valley Community
Foundation
Details next month

Members and their guests are invited to all League meetings and events. Please join us at a regular board meeting to listen and participate. Snacks provided.

Bring a friend!



Charter schools explained at Lunch & Learn

by Francine M. Farber



“I work in behalf of families that don’t know that I exist,” explained Debra Odom, manager of Charter Schools for Fresno Unified. She spoke to an interested audience of more than 30 members and guests at a Lunch & Learn at the studio at Valley Public Television (PBS), a new venue for LWVF courtesy of CEO Phil Meyer and Elizabeth Laval, the station’s chief development officer.

Odom explained charter school basics:

- ◆ They are public schools and are given charters to operate by regular public school districts or county offices of education, and subsequently operate as their own school districts with their own school boards.
- ◆ They receive Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funds from the state for each student who attends each day, just like public schools do. That is their “income,” and from it pay all payroll and other expenses. Some charters also receive money from fund-raising or benefactors. The ADA money that goes to the charter school would have gone to each student’s home district.
- ◆ A regular school district must approve a proposed charter school’s petition unless there is a factual reason not to.
- ◆ They are set up to serve previously underserved students who in their own or parents’ eyes are not profiting from the regular public school program.
- ◆ A charter may be non-renewed by the chartering district if the school fails to follow the law and its mission. The most common reasons for failure are finances and lack of expertise of the administration.

Odom reviews proposed charter petitions, makes recommendations for changes, and then makes a recommendation to the Fresno Unified Board; that body decides whether to issue the charter. She believes that charter schools provide options for people, who tend to “buy in” because they have chosen the school rather than having been assigned to it. Her job is to make sure that the schools follow the mission of their charter, follow the intent of state law regarding charter schools, and provide what is good for students and the community.

(continued on page 10)

President's Message



Member News

Please edit your roster

New Member
Diego Arambula
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The luncheon speaker at our Annual Meeting was Mayor Lee Brand. He did a great job conveying his enthusiasm and style for leading Fresno. The Mayor is a collaborator; he seems able to keep his eye on the goal while gathering opposing stakeholders together and hammering out compromises. This was evident with his first major action by proposing the Rental Housing Improvement Act, and getting the City Council to agree.

But just a few days after Mayor Brand's speech to us, I attended a demonstration in front of City Hall, where leaders from Faith in the Valley expressed disappointment with him. To that group, the Mayor failed to address a list of requests for budgetary expenditures they felt would support Fresno's most vulnerable families, such as an office of immigrant and refugee affairs, a legal defense fund for Fresno families, maintaining the current police auditor and expanding his powers, the timely implementation of the Rental Housing Improvement Act, and more.

It is a monumental task to hold the needs of all the citizens of a city as diverse as Fresno in mind when taking legislative action. How do you prioritize the needs of the various citizens and neighborhoods? Is there an obligation to take into account those groups who have the least ability to demand their needs be met? And, when the needs of one segment of the City are met, won't others inevitably be marginalized by the decision?

This has made me think about an oft repeated League mantra: "We advocate for good government." Many of us would say that good government is decision making that is responsive, transparent, and accountable to citizens. But frankly, I've never felt like cheering for a decision when my side of the issue doesn't prevail. Yes, I want "good government," but I also want the opposing side to throw their hands up and admit that my take on the issue was correct.

And that brings me to another stalwart League idea: Consensus. Consensus is not a vote. It is an agreement arrived at by discussion. An issue is looked at from all sides, and everyone has an opportunity to express their view. This is a mighty slow process, and one that earns the League the reputation of moving (too?) slowly on issues.

A decision reached by consensus is so much more satisfying to all parties than a vote. Isn't there a way to build consensus in our City and reduce the mounting frustration that comes when every single issue has winners and losers?

Marianne

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

Mailing Address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710

Volume 76, No. 6 Editor: Francine Farber

NOTICE

In order to conserve our resources, in July you will receive the Voter only electronically, as in past years.

Beginning in August, you will receive the Voter both by mail and electronically since there is no additional cost for us to do that. That will allow you to read it in color, and in larger type if you desire. We hope you enjoy it.

We cannot send the Voter electronically to some people, and by mail to others, because we will lose our favorable bulk mail rate.

A League donation is a great birthday or holiday gift or as a memorial. Please make checks out to

LWVF

1345 Bulldog Lane

Fresno, CA 93710

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



Thank You!

Natural Resources

by Mary Savala

[San Joaquin River Conservancy](#) has released the Draft Update of the San Joaquin River Parkway Master Plan and Environmental Impact Review (EIR) which presents updated goals and policies for the planned 22-mile Parkway between Friant Dam and Highway 99.

The Plan envisions future uses, improvements, features, and management measures to simultaneously conserve/restore habitat and increase the recreational use of thousands of acres in the San Joaquin River bottom. The Plan and EIR are available for public review on the Conservancy homepage at <http://sjrc.ca.gov/>. (Go to “**Quick Links**” and click on “Parkway Master Plan Update.”) Public comments are encouraged and can be submitted at any time through June 29.

If you have questions or wish to participate in the review, please call Radley Reep at 226-8683.

[Transportation Funding](#)

The Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017 is estimated to provide \$52.4 billion over ten years to California’s State-wide, Regional and Local Investment programs through fuel taxes, vehicle-based fees and repayment from outstanding loans to the state’s General Fund. Expenditures from the Act will be as follows:

Statewide Investments (50%)

- ◆ Fix it First Highways - \$15 billion
- ◆ Bridge and Culvert repair - \$4 billion
- ◆ Trade Corridor Investments - \$3 billion
- ◆ Solutions/ Congested Commute Corridors - \$2.5 billion
- ◆ Parks Funding for Off-Highway Vehicle & Boating - \$800 million
- ◆ State Transportation Improvement Funds \$275 million
- ◆ Freeway Service Patrol - \$250 million
- ◆ CA Public Univ. Transportation Research - \$70 million

(Some of this research money looks to go to the new CSUF Transportation Institute to which Fresno COG has contributed \$3 million from Measure C funds)

(continued on page 9)

Student Unit

by Lisa Bryant

We are wrapping up another school year at Fresno State and it is always a bittersweet time. We are happy to see students graduate and move on to bigger and better things, but that also means say-



ing goodbye to student leaders. This year, both our President Alexandra Gallo, and Vice President Andrew Dadasovich, are graduating. Congratulations to them both!

If you know of any Fresno State students who are interested in joining the LWV or taking a leadership position in our organization, please have them email Faculty Advisor Lisa Bryant at lbryant@csufresno.edu.

Vote for the Women’s Equality Award!

[See next page for nominees](#)

Previous winners:

Judge Hillary Chittick

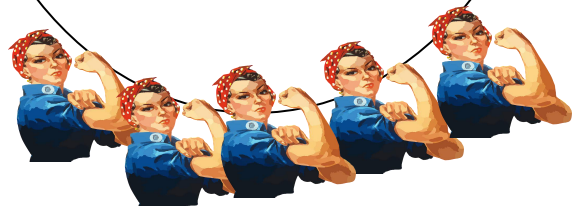
Susan Anderson

Brandi Orth

Lynne Ashbeck

Kerri Donis

Deborah Ikeda



Help us choose the Women's Equality Day Winner!



Nominees:

- ◆ Dr. Judith Kuipers, one of the first women administrators in CSU system, retired college chancellor
- ◆ Irma Olguin, Jr. co-founder and CEO of Bitwise Industries (technology education)
- ◆ Dr. Marcia Sablan, family physician, former Firebaugh mayor and City Council member
- ◆ Wilma Quan-Schechter, newly appointed first woman City Manager in Fresno
- ◆ Dr. Sandra Witt, Dean, Jordan School of Agriculture at Fresno State
- ◆ Dr. Janet Young, retiring Superintendent of Clovis Unified Schools

Send your vote by June 7 to
Francine Farber at fmfarber@hotmail.com, or 226-5455

Celebration will take place in August, date to be announced

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



The Fresno County Behavioral Health Board (BHB) began its May meeting with the reading of the Proclamation from the Board of Supervisors declaring May to be Mental Health Month.

Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) Director Dawan Utecht gave an extensive budget overview, explaining that this year's County budget will begin in September rather than July, necessitating a "bridge" budget to cover the time gap. Currently, there is no concern about the possible reversion of Mental Health Service Act funds that remain in reserve. The big uncertainty is the future of the Affordable Care Act or any replacement health care plan.

Prior to the May meeting members of the BHB visited Spirit of Woman, a residential program that provides substance use disorder treatment to women, using a family-focused approach. Most referrals come from Child Protective Services, Probation Department, and CalWorks. Courts seeking reunification of families place clients at

Spirit of Woman. Most residents have co-occurring conditions, needing mental health treatment. Currently DBH contracts for 19 of the 60 available beds. Some children are allowed to live with their mothers during treatment. The funded length of stay has been reduced to 180 days, which staff feel is inadequate to meet the needs of their clients. However, the program's completion rate of 49% at Spirit of Woman is far higher than the state average of 28% for similar programs.

It was reported that the BHB Community Forum in Auberry was a successful event with requests for more education about mental health for community members, as well as for training of school staff. The community also asked for help for their homeless population, which is increasing in numbers.

The draft of the redesigned Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System Implementation Plan is complete and available for review on the DBH website. The new plan will provide more and better services for all individuals needing substance use disorder treatment, including clients with co-occurring mental health conditions. Public comments are welcomed and encouraged.

Education

by Kay Bertken



Beyond the lively and informative charter school lunch and learn program on charter schools by Debra Odom, most of the local news in education has been around the search for a new superintendent and career technical education. The Fresno Unified website posted a survey to assess what community members see as important in a new superintendent. Public meetings were held at high schools around the district soliciting public comment.

CTE begins in elementary school

At its first meeting in May, the FUSD Board listened to a budget planning item concerning the district's career technical education program. Sally Fowler, the Director of College and Career Readiness for the district, presented recommendations for the next budget year built on program continuation and growth. Beginning with career awareness in the very early grades to on-site business training and apprenticeships, CTE is thriving in Fresno Unified.

The number of college qualifying (A-G) CTE courses in the District has increased by more than 14% in the last three years to 78%. While there is full recognition that some skill-based courses should not also be academically qualifying, a District goal has been to assure that students graduate with college and career options in recognition that even a career choice will probably involve some additional post high school training.

High school courses related to workforce needs

All high schools in the District have two to three academic courses "linked" and coordinated with sequenced coursework in a particular field of interest, all related to local labor force needs. Examples of these pathways include Business Marketing and Technology at Bullard, Eco-technology at Hoover, and Agri-science and Technology at Sunnyside. Many of the schools have health related pathways. All of the pathways introduce students to the potential of multiple careers within the general field.

New proposals include a rehabilitation of the old Law magnet at Bullard into a Law and Social Justice pathway,

Next Board Meeting, June 14, 5:30 p.m.
Comcast Ch.98 / AT&T U-verse Ch. 99
Streaming on Board website

an integration of the International Baccalaureate program and an Engineering and Construction Management pathway at Fresno High, and a new Medium/Heavy Truck Maintenance program at Duncan.

A Career Technical Education Summit was held at Duncan Polytechnic High School which included tours of the remarkable facilities on that campus that serves as one of the District's CTE centered high schools—the others being CART and the Patino High School for Entrepreneurship. The summit included spokespersons for FUSD plus the Community College District and the County Office of Education, both of which are elaborating and promoting their own vocational programs.

Coordination between FCC and FUSD

City College maintains dozens of career certification and training programs, including the largest nursing training program in the state. They anticipate growth in coordination between City College and Fresno Unified programs. The Fresno County Office of Education is planning to open CTEC, a charter high school, in August of 2018. The school will be located on land owned by the FCOE opposite San Joaquin Memorial High School. It will focus on skills in the fields of advanced manufacturing and commercial construction.

Heberger ad from top of page 8 in March issue

Our Student Unit president is Top Dog at Fresno State

Alexandra Gallo of Hollister was awarded top undergraduate University honors at Fresno State's 106th Commencement on May 20 when she was chosen as the President's Medalist at the Save Mart Center.

Alexandra was chosen from a group of nine Deans' Undergraduate Medalists .

Gallo, who earned her bachelor's degrees in Political Science and Communications, completed her B.A. with a GPA of 3.81.

Difficult family circumstances inspired Alexandra, a first generation college student, to obtain a degree and help others. Gallo seized opportunities to serve and engage during her time at Fresno State. She studied abroad, was elected to student government, served as an ambassador for the Richter Center for Community Engagement and Service-Learning, was as a Maddy intern with Congressman Jim Costa and worked with the League of

Woman Voters as president of the Student Unit.

She's a three-time winner of the President's Volunteer Service Award for completing 200 hours of service each year at organizations like the Every Neighborhood Partnership and the Ronald McDonald House. She also planned a camp for children with parents battling cancer.



In addition, Alexandra was a three-time winner of a \$1,000 Bette Peterson League scholarship, the only student ever to achieve that distinction.

“The College of Social Science has taught me how to be a critical thinker, and how to apply leadership and theories to governmental agencies, jobs and community service work,” she said. After graduation, Alexandra will intern in Washington, D.C., with Congressman Costa before applying to law school.



HOW ABOUT A GUIDED PARKS TRIP

ON A DELIGHTFUL SPRING DAY?

The League of Women Voters of Fresno
invites you to a FREE breakfast and bus trip
to learn about the needs of our parks
in southeast and southwest Fresno

Wednesday, June 14

Assemble at Stone Soup, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno

8:30 Breakfast and meet your tour guide

9:00 Bus leaves promptly

Noon Bus returns to Stone Soup

Bus seating may be limited

Be sure to call by June 9
to reserve your space

559.431.0360

Free parking at Stone Soup

*Enter driveway on west side of 6th just before
intersection of 6th and Bulldog Lane. Follow signs.*

The public is invited!

Parks Bus Trip funded by a generous grant from

The California Endowment



Health Care

by Richard Bertken, M.D.



- ◆ “51% Merced County Residents Have Medi-Cal.”
- ◆ “45% Madera County Covered by Medi-Cal.”
- ◆ “50% Fresno County Covered by Medi-Cal”
- ◆ “55% Tulare County Residents Have Medi-Cal.”

These are the messages of many new signs, in the corresponding counties, along the main freeways and secondary highways in the Central Valley. Passing motorists are allowed, or even encouraged, to wonder what to think about these remarkable statistics

One might be saddened, as I was, by the extent of poverty implied by these numbers. Fiscal conservatives might be distressed at the growth of Medicaid (California’s version is Medi-Cal), one of our nation’s largest budget items at \$500 billion yearly. Health care wonks might be impressed by the success of our region’s implementation of the Medicaid expansion funded by the Affordable Care Act.

The highway signs are the brainchild of Health Access California, one of numerous organizations working to improve medical systems in our state. “We’re trying to remind people what’s at stake,” said Anthony Wright, executive director of the organization. “We want to tell people that even if you’re not on Medi-Cal, it’s a critical part of the health care system in your community.”

The Medi-Cal system is threatened by the Congressional proposals to defund

the Medicaid expansion, taking away health care from 5 million Californians and, at least temporarily, throwing our hospitals into fiscal crisis. Further, Congress wants to take away the flexibility of states, like our own, to spend more on their Medicaid programs with the promise of matching funds from Washington.

The Medicaid expansion under the ACA funneled 15 billion dollars into California’s Medi-Cal budget, increasing total enrollment by 5 million to 13.5 million—a third of the state. Also increased, and dramatically so, were preventive, psychological and drug addiction services. California’s aggressive implementation of its Medi-Cal expansion has resulted in noticeably (to me, as a Medi-Cal specialist provider) better access to primary care and psychological and psychiatric services for low-income patients in the Fresno metropolitan area, and most likely throughout the entire state.

Whereas Medicare has experienced nearly continuous double-digit inflation and therefore the ire of budget hawks and opponents of the perceived growth of the federal government, Medicaid has remained largely under their radar due to much lower cost per citizen, lower rates of inflation, and decentralized management. A notable exception was the refusal of 19 states to accept the Medicaid expansion on primarily ideological grounds. Texas and Florida, for example, each denied access to health care to over a million of their citizens because of concern about the growth of “entitlements” and their associated costs.

In this light, Columbia health care guru Michael Sparer’s column in the May 18 issue of the *New York Times*—“The New Obamacare: Medicaid”—brings a new perspective to our Medicaid program. Underfunded and undermanned, Medicaid’s virtues are generally overlooked. It has diverse federal, state, and local revenue streams. States are using their Medicaid programs as models of innovation.

The majority of Medicaid recipients are enrolled in private managed-care plans, demonstrating an overall successful public-private partnership. Medicaid beneficiaries have modest or no co-pays and no caps on coverage. Their chief difficulty lies in finding doctors who accept their insurance.

Of course, this feature is not a conceptual defect in Medicaid beyond the general idea of controlling remuneration to physicians, which Medicare has never been able to achieve. In Sparer’s view, adequate service fees or per capita payments for medical services could make Medicaid into a nationwide health plan that otherwise uninsured citizens would be willing to buy into.

Dr. Bertken may be reached at DrBertken@comcast.net



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NATURAL RESOURCES

(continued from page 3)

Local or Regional Investment (50%)

- ◆ Fix-it-First Local Roads - \$15 billion
- ◆ Transit Capital & Operations - \$7.5 billion
- ◆ Local Partnership Funds - \$2 billion
- ◆ Bicycle/Pedestrian Investments - \$1 billion
- ◆ State Transportation Improvement Fund - Local Share - \$825 million

Local Planning Grants - \$250 million (Fresno COG will receive over \$1 million in grants annually)

Fresno County and its municipalities will be receiving almost \$23 million in 2017-2018 and over \$32 million in revenues from the new legislation in 2018-2019 for local streets and roads.

Green House Gas Emissions Reductions

The Fresno COG is recommending to the California Air Resources Board that a goal of 13% reduction by 2020 is reasonable and achievable. COG achieved a reduction of 11% above its 2014 base. It believes we can achieve reductions of 13% per capita through better land use planning, transit investments, ridesharing and van pooling, and reductions in emissions from automobile tail pipes, even though projecting an increase the number of vehicle miles traveled in our planning region.

These strategies for reductions are the sustainable strategies required of all Metropolitan Planning Agencies by SB375 and must be reflected in the expenditures and policies of the updated Regional Transportation Plan for Fresno County.



OUR LOCAL PRORITIES

1. Civic Engagement

The Civic Engagement group first defined “civic engagement” as citizens working together to make a change or difference in the community. Then, thinking about the League’s strength and breadth of involvement in so many community issues, we came up with ways that we might communicate our expertise to others, giving them the tools to become more engaged. One idea is to create a series of small format, topic-specific fliers that could be distributed at public gatherings. The idea is that if people are already somewhat interested, we would offer assistance to aid their further engagement. Another idea is to improve our website and Facebook pages by adding entertaining video clips about the League’s expertise in different areas. We are investigating several possibilities for either using existing videos or creating our own. Additionally, we are considering ways to make our digital presence more captivating. **If you are interested in joining the Civic Engagement Committee’s work, contact Marianne Kast at fourkasts@gmail.com.**



2. Education

Members of the Education committee are compiling information about charter schools in Fresno Unified, including demographics and academic success. Eventually they will team up to learn more about each school first-hand by making site visits.

At this time there are 8 schools operating under charters issued by Fresno Unified. Another group of charter schools operates within Fresno County but has been chartered by other school districts or the Fresno County Board of Education. **Contact Kay Bertken if you are interested in this work at kayb@csufresno.edu.**



3. Housing

The Committee decided to pursue a better understanding of affordability in housing. We made a list of potential agencies and people who might aid our education on the subject. We invited Ashley Werner from Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability (LCJA) to provide an overview of affordable housing issues in the City of Fresno. The LCJA has been involved in several different approaches to securing funding and support to ease the housing crisis in our city, where more than half the residents pay over one-third of their income in rent. The Committee will next work on understanding the Housing Element of the General Plan for the City of Fresno. **If you are interested in this committee, contact Marianne Kast at fourkasts@gmail.com.**



Charter Schools

(continued from page 1)

When a charter is up for renewal, Odom makes both announced and unannounced visits to the school, talks with teachers, students and parents, and sits in on classes. She attends the charter school's Board meetings from time to time. Other members of the Fresno Unified team from ten departments monitor and evaluate important areas, including fiscal, special education and English Learner criteria.

Odom believes that every child deserves access to a quality education, no matter what their socioeconomic status, and that a great education is the economic equalizer.

She holds a master's degree in Education Administration and Supervision from California State University, Fresno.

The recent charter school workshop was developed by the LWVF Education Committee led by Kay Bertken. Following the selection of Education as one of three local priorities at our annual Program Planning meeting in February, that committee narrowed its focus to charters and school choice. This was the first in a series of workshops on the topic.



Water News by Diane Merrill

Since at least 2013, LWV of Fresno has been concerned about contamination of groundwater in the San Joaquin Valley by 1, 2, 3 – Trichloropropane (1, 2, 3-TCP), a substance manufactured by Shell Oil Company and Dow Chemical Company. It was used in soil fumigants throughout California from the 1950s through the 1980s. The State of California recognizes TCP as a chemical “known to the State to cause cancer” under Proposition 65, the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986.

1, 2, 3-TCP contamination has been detected in nearly 100 water systems in 16 counties. It is wide-spread in agricultural areas, especially Fresno, Tulare, and Kern counties. Small disadvantaged communities are disproportionately impacted. A number of communities ranging in size from the cities of Fresno and Clovis to smaller unincorporated communities, such as Del Rey, have filed lawsuits against the manufacturers.

The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) is in the process of establishing a maximum contaminant level (MCL) for 1, 2, 3-TCP. In April LWV of California joined 52 other organizations in signing a letter urging the SWRCB to adopt, in an expeditious manner, the recommendation of the Division of Drinking Water to establish a MCL of 5 parts per trillion (ppt). The letter states that “setting the MCL at 5 ppt would expedite cost-recovery efforts that have been pending for years, while providing strong health protection and limiting medical costs. Furthermore, the state's office of sustainable water solutions and complementary TA program is perfectly situated to ensure that small communities share in the benefits of drinking water free of this harmful carcinogen.”

The Control Board may establish the MCL as early as June 2017 to take effect in 2018.



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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, Fresno, CA 93710.

.....
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Address: _____