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

# The *Fresno* **VOTER**



- Wednesday, March 5
- Wednesday, March 19
- Ag Study Panels
- SEE FLYER INSIDE
  
- Thursday, March 20
- King Corn—documentary film
- 12:30—3 p.m.
- Woodward Park Library
  
- Tuesday, March 25
- Regular Board Meeting
- 5 p.m., League Office
  
- Saturday, March 29
- Ag Study Consensus
- 9 a.m. Stone Soup
  
- Thursday, April 3
- First Ladies Reception
- 5—8 p.m. City Hall
- See flyer inside
  
- Saturday, April 26
- Annual Meeting & Luncheon
- Stone Soup
- Dr. Joseph Castro, President of Fresno State, will speak

## Local and national priorities set at Program Planning meeting

by Francine Farber

**A** small but dedicated group of members decided on local and national priorities for the coming year at the annual Program Planning meeting on February 15.

The local priorities selected are:

- ◆ Continued education and advocacy for mental health
- ◆ Regional water education and advocacy
- ◆ Continued monitoring of Fresno County’s land use policies and the proposed General Plan

The national priorities chosen are:

- ◆ Support for a study proposed by Cleveland area leagues to explore alternatives to the primary process in elections
- ◆ Support for LWVUS efforts regarding climate change

Before making their selections, the participants heard from Board directors on their portfolio issues, including government and voter services, natural resource issues of land use, transportation and energy, and social policy issues of education and mental health. The directors discussed how our League worked on last year’s priorities and made recommendations concerning new goals.

Proponents of the local priorities will establish task forces to develop ideas for implementing them. Members who are interested in working on one of these task forces should submit their names to Pat Campbell, Director for Program Planning, at [soupsbook5@comcast.net](mailto:soupsbook5@comcast.net) or 472-3018. Members will have the opportunity to ratify the priorities at the League’s Annual Meeting on April 26.

# President's Message



Carrie Chapman Catt noted that “every responsible...adult...without regard to race, sex, color or creed has his or her own...voice in government”. The LWVUS has long been a crusader for voting rights and has worked with Congress over many years to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act (VRA). Progress has been made but from 1982 – 2006, the Department of Justice blocked over 700 discriminatory voting changes, proof that a strong VRA is essential.

We have all heard about the damage done to the VRA by the Supreme Court decision in Shelby vs Holder. Last month Liz Shields described the decision and also mentioned the VRA amendment proposed by a bipartisan group of legislators that would establish preclearance for Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. It would help but does not address all issues. The original VRA required preclearance from 9 states and parts of 6 others.

Since the Shelby decision, 8 states have instituted voting restrictions. Some examples are:

**North Carolina, one month after the decision, passed the worst of the voter suppression laws that included strict Voter I.D., cuts to early voting and elimination of same-day voter registration with an estimated negative impact on 3 million citizens who voted in 2012.**

**Kansas cut early voting by a week and 17,000 voters were blocked from registering because the DMV didn't transfer citizenship documents to the election office.**

**Ohio recently voted to cut early voting by a week and passed a bill preventing the Secretary of State from mailing absentee ballots unless the legislature provides money (considered unlikely). These and other restrictions could impact millions of voters.**

You will likely receive notices in the near future to add your voices to the LWVUS efforts to defend this most precious of rights.

*Nyla*

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

**Mailing Address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710**

**Volume 73, No. 3 Editor: Francine Farber**

## Member News

**Please mark your roster accordingly.**

### New Members

**Carolyn and Al Evans**

**1079 East Palo Alto**

**Fresno, CA 93710**

**435-7439**

**evansalca@comcast.net**

### Change of e-mail address

**Dolores O'Neal**

**Dolores.oneal@yahoo.com**



**Carrie Chapman Catt**

### **Membership Circle Donors**

Sandra Aune, Mary Biskup, Betty Cornelisen, Alberta Ferrer, Jody Fitzpatrick, Rosemary Hillman, Terry Johnson, Marianne Kast, Susan Kuhn, Louise Richardson, Janet Ryan, Walt Shubin, Robert Wright

### **Board Leadership Circle**

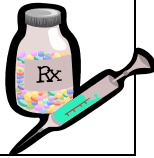
Patsy Anderson, Carol Bequette, Terri Figgs, Stephenie Frederick, Shirley Golden, Karen Goodman, Yolanda Partida, Liz Shields, Laura Silberman

### **Presidents Circle Donors**

Jacquie Canfield, Francine Farber, Joan Lipton, Linda Mack, Bette Noblett, Nancy Richardson, Lynne Rodriguez, Mary Savala, Georgia Sisson, Sue Strauss, Shirley Valett, Jane Worsley, Nyla Zender, CK in honor of Francine's birthday

## Health Care Reform

by Richard Bertken, M.D.



Remarkably, of all the San Joaquin Valley counties, only Kern and Fresno provide full health insurance plans for undocumented immigrants. Yet these immigrants account for over 80% of the agricultural labor force, the engine of the Valley economy, according to Dr. Andy Alvarado of the Latino Center for Medical Education and Research.

Of the nine California counties currently providing full health insurance plans to unauthorized immigrants, only Fresno is considering eliminating this coverage because of a decline in state support of medically indigent adult (MIA) programs. The other eight counties are feeling the stress but, so far, are moving ahead with budgets that maintain health care funding for their undocumented population.

### Ban on unauthorized immigrants

The great windfall of the ACA—a major federally-funded expansion of MediCal and federally-funded subsidization of private health insurance—should have dramatically eased state and county budgets. We might have ultimately seen a welcome simplification of our health system by eliminating the need for MIA-type programs across the country. But the ban on unauthorized immigrants participating in the ACA means that there is a substantial residual population who will need hospitalization or other crisis care that will not be compensated or perhaps even provided.

### CalWorks gets added funds

Assembly Bill 85, passed last June, parsed out the windfall in great detail, anticipating a rapid fall-off in MIA enrollments due to conversions to MediCal and subsidized Covered California health plans. So far there has been no clear explanation why the formula



for redistributing state funding to county health departments went so far towards creating crises in the MIA programs. Money was instead allocated to CalWorks, a welfare-to-work program, and to expansion of other county public health activities that were perceived as inadequately funded in the past.

The County has shown its hand by asking Superior Court Judge Donald S. Black to quash a 30-year old injunction requiring Fresno County to maintain an MIA program that included undocumented immigrants. His decision was awaited as we went to press.

### Faith-based advocacy group formed

Meanwhile, a coalition of faith-based community leaders, legal assistance professionals and health care providers has established a Workforce Group to advocate maintaining our commitment to health insurance for unauthorized immigrants. The Director of the Health Department, David Pomaville, and the Assistant Director, David Luchini, were present for the first meeting on February 12th. The dialog was productive, but actionable proposals will need to emerge in future meetings.

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## Transportation

by Stephenie Frederick



On January 30 the Fresno city council refused to award two contracts needed to build a bus rapid transit (BRT) system in Fresno. The 4-3 vote brought the project to a halt, six years after a differently composed city council had instructed city staff to proceed with planning, funding, and building the system.

For more than six hours, ninety-three people testified before the council. The last speaker was a representative of Granville Homes, who focused more on the General Plan update than on bus rapid transit.

The update, which emphasizes infill rather than peripheral development, seemed to be the true motivator of the anti-BRT vote. The latter is more lucrative for developers. However, sprawl does not produce enough property taxes to pay for the city services it needs. It thus impairs the city's ability to serve all of its residents well. For this reason, the General Plan update envisions more compact city growth.

The BRT is central to the update, which was developed after an intense, transparent public process. At the present time, city officials, staff, and developers are attempting to negotiate a way forward. Staff at the Fresno County Council of Governments predicts that BRT will eventually be approved, although probably in a reduced form.

Failure to approve BRT will necessitate revision of the General Plan update and the Regional Transportation Plan. This may cost taxpayers millions of dollars.

LWVF members addressed the city council in favor of BRT, and our league continues to advocate for its implementation.

## Voter Services

by Liz Shields



**“How do I choose a judge?”** Judgeships are non-partisan positions and judges cannot by law indicate how they would decide in future cases. These factors make it difficult for voters to make thoughtful, informed choices during elections.

**In the upcoming June primary there will be 21 Fresno County Superior Court judges on the ballot.** Nineteen of those are incumbents who are currently running unopposed. One judge is retiring and his position is being contested by five candidates. In the other race the incumbent has one challenger. Superior Court judges run for re-election every six years when challengers may run against them. Between elections vacancies are filled by appointment by the governor.

On the November General Election ballot there will be three State Supreme Court judicial positions and five judicial positions for the 5<sup>th</sup> District Court of Appeals in Fresno for election or re-election. In California appellate court justices are considered merit appointments that are nominated by the governor, confirmed by the Commission on Judicial Appointments and voted on in the next general election for either a 12-year term or until completion of the term if they are filling a vacant position. They can run for re-election at the end of the term.

**The National Association of Women Judges is concerned about the increasing politicization of judgeships and the increase in special interest financing of judicial elections.** It has launched a voter information initiative, The Informed Voter – Fair Judges, to educate voters about the election of judges. Ways to find that information include local bar association ratings, League web sites such as SmartVoter.org, funding of paid advertising, candidate forums and other unbiased sources.

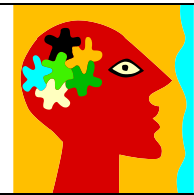
# *Education*

by Kay Bertken



# *Mental Health*

by Francine Farber



At the February 12 Fresno Unified Board meeting, Leadership students from Tehipite Middle School, their campus culture director and their principal provided a positive and enthusiastic look at the impacts of the district's middle school redesign initiative. Middle school schedules have been realigned to allow students elective course options. In addition, the district has been focusing attention and funding to increase student participation in the arts, athletics and activities.

Reflecting the better state of the California economy, the governor is proposing \$ 4.5 billion toward the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) for K-12 and charter schools, an increase over the amount previously proposed.

In the debate between those who would specifically target the funding to the neediest students versus those who would allow use of the funds for general needs, the State Board allowed flexibility to the districts to fund general projects. Members of the public, including student groups, have requested public participation in the local budgeting of the new funds. FUSD has said it will be holding public meetings from now until April to develop the required local accountability plan.

The CORE waiver has established the California Office to Reform Education to coordinate the efforts of the ten cooperating districts. This month the Board approved funding to the CORE office and to Long Beach to create the partnerships between target schools that will share successful practices. The FTA did not sign off on the CORE waiver and is not enthusiastic about its provisions.

Under the waiver, Fresno is no longer obligated to offer supplemental tutoring to students at schools failing to meet NCLB standards. Previously parents could choose the provider, and the district would pay that provider. For some time administration and Board members have complained about the poor quality of the tutoring services they had to fund. This month, the Board chose just three providers for tutoring, based on the type and quality of the services they had been providing.

In her monthly report to the Mental Health Board, Director of the Department of Behavioral Health Dawan Utecht announced that two new deputy directors have been hired to facilitate the work of the department, one for clinical services and one for business operations. In addition, the Board of Supervisors approved several new positions to work on the administration of the Affordable Care Act, which is bringing many changes to mental health services.

Utecht acknowledged that some concerns had been raised in a Fresno Bee editorial regarding the Stars Behavioral Health Corporation which was awarded the contract for an acute psychiatric in-patient facility for children and adolescents. She gave assurances that the department is making sure that the provider meets all requirements and that she is talking with other counties that have used this provider in the past. The Board of Supervisors is scheduled to review the contract on May 1 for final approval.

The DBH has been involved in a complex stakeholder process to secure input from the public, consumers, providers and staff regarding department programs and services. To date 28 meetings have been held and 4 meetings are planned to share the information that has been garnered. Then a workgroup will be created to review the gaps and strengths in mental health services and make recommendations to the department.

A client complaint about the Santa Clara residence from last month has been investigated. Much of the problems at this 69 unit facility appear to result from unescorted visitors. There is 24/7 security and reported incidents have been reduced to 1 or 2 a day. These might include medical emergencies.

The public is invited to a workshop put on by Kevin Hines, a survivor of a suicide jump off of the Golden Gate Bridge in 2000. At age 17 he had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. He is now speaking out about living mentally well. The workshop will be held at the Satellite Student Union Building at Fresno State at 5 p.m. on March 12.

We are grateful to our sponsors for their support in "Making Democracy Work."  
 League members who wish to be sponsors or to secure sponsorship for us, may contact Francine Farber at 226-5455

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**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.

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**The League of Women Voters of Fresno  
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## **Current Issues in Agriculture**

**\*Seminar One\***

### **Agriculture's Economic Health**

**Wednesday, March 5**

**11:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m.**

#### **Panelists**

**Paul Betancourt, Grower; Jerry Prieto, former FC Agriculture Commissioner;  
Dr. Daniel Sumner, Agriculture Economist, UC Davis; Jeff Yasui, USDA Risk Management**

**\*Seminar Two\***

### **From Animal Management to Food Safety**

**Wednesday, March 19**

**11:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m.**

#### **Panelists**

**Bill Griffin, Fresno County Ag Commission; Charlene McLaughlin, Bovine Veterinarian;  
Kiel Schmidt, Urban Organic Farmer; Paul Wenger, President, California Farm Bureau**

**See relevant articles on Web site — [lwvfresno.org/agriculture study](http://lwvfresno.org/agriculture%20study)**

**Location of both Seminars**

**Community Media Access Collaborative (CMAC)**

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*Courtesy of Joseph Levy*

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April 3—30, 2014

Fresno City Hall

Opening Reception

Thursday, April 3

5:00—8:00 p.m.

Program at 6:00 p.m.