



Phone: 559-226-VOTE

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

The Fresno VOTER

Monday, November 21
Regular Board Meeting
5 p.m., League Office

Sunday, December 4
Holiday Party
2-4 p.m., Watkins Home
See flyer

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

Saturday, February 4
Program Planning
League Office
9 a.m.—noon



**Members and
their guests
are invited to all
League meetings and events**

Prop 64: Should we legalize marijuana?

by Richard Bertken, M.D.



It is nearly certain that possession, use, production and sale of limited amounts of marijuana will become legal in California. The lead sponsors and authors of Proposition 64 say that their primary goal is to restructure America's underclass society.

They cite data showing ongoing, large-scale incarceration for marijuana offenses throughout the nation— in spite of varying degrees of decriminalization by half the states. While marijuana production, sales, and use are as prevalent among white Americans as among American youth of color, four times as many African Americans and twice as many Hispanics are in jail for marijuana-related convictions. A central feature of Prop 64 is graded amnesty for most of these convictions. This will result in tens of millions of dollars of annual savings on law enforcement and imprisonment. There will also be a very large marijuana tax bonanza for state coffers. On the other hand, marijuana legalization presents challenges to public health policy, the medical research establishment, and our health care systems.

The chief medical concerns are the increasing strength and diversity of *cannabinoids*, the active ingredients of marijuana and the most rapidly growing class of synthesized recreational drugs. These drugs bind to specific receptors on brain cells, modifying mood, pain and special sense perception, hunger, sleep, and general electrical activity in the brain. Most moderately stoned people experience relaxation, intensified appreciation of the world around them, and reduced awareness of their reduced psychomotor skills and level of activity. However, some vulnerable patients experience panic or psychosis; in some patients these afflictions remain for weeks, months, or years. About 15% of recreational cannabis users become daily users with physiologic dependence.

Research on how to prevent and treat acute and chronic marijuana use disorders is far behind the growth of marijuana use and the diversity of ever more powerful cannabinoids. Legalization of casual use of marijuana by states could facilitate cannabinoid research, but in the end the federal government will be obliged to end its drug war on marijuana so that cannabis researchers can get funding and access to the basic chemicals and subjects needed for their experiments.

(continued on page 6)

President's Message



Hateful, disrespectful, intolerant and isolationist statements have marked this political campaign, and I believe that most people are eager to have it all end on November 8. However, my fear is that it will continue long after the election; the segment of the population that identifies with those negatives may continue to be active if they feel they have been validated.

These thoughts were on my mind as I prepared my presentation on the book *Geography of Genius* for my book club. In it the author analyzes the causes for several clusters of genius, including Athens in ancient Greek times, Hangzhou during the Chinese Song Dynasty, (969-1276 AD), Florence (1434-1492), Edinburgh (later 18th C-early 19th C.), Calcutta (1840-1920), Vienna (1800's – 1914) and Silicon Valley (1912-now).

What were the reasons behind such creativity and enlightenment, called the Golden Age, in each place? Those I found particularly interesting were that many had enlightened or benevolent leaders; in several there was social mixing among rich and ordinary citizens; and most importantly, all were open to foreign ideas. Foreigners were let into the cities and they contributed mightily. To quote the author, "This openness to different experiences and input is the single most important trait of exceptionally creative people."

By the same token, some of the causes of the end of each Golden Age were a change in the treatment of foreigners, lack of tolerance and openness, and increased isolation.

Throughout the book, the author referred to a quote by Plato who said, "*What is honored in a country will be cultivated there.*" Our country somehow must learn to honor the idea of electing enlightened leaders; working to change the isolation of the rich and powerful from ordinary citizens; celebrating our cultural diversity; and being tolerant, respectful and welcoming to all who share our country with us.

Nyla

The VOTER is a monthly publication of the League of Women Voters of Fresno
Mailing Address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710
Volume 75, No. 11 Editor: Francine Farber

Member News

Please Note Changes in Your Roster

Change of Address

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



Thank You!

Please welcome
our new advertiser
**Transitions
Counseling
Center**
Margot Tepperman

Voter Services by Marianne Kast

In the Voter Services world we often measure our success by numbers. If we register 450 high school students in one day, as we did recently at Buchanan High School in Clovis, we feel great. But if we spend all day at a registration table at CenCalVia, an outdoor street event, as we did last month, and register just a handful of new voters, we wonder if that is the best use of our volunteers' time. Recently, though, a couple of experiences reminded me that the League's best work is not always reflected in numbers.

On an evening in October I drove to Selma to an affordable housing complex. This was among the 25 or so requests we've received for ballot issues presentations or assistance with voter registration. There, I sat around a small table next to the coin laundry with five women who, I would have guessed, were not likely to vote in the upcoming election. One, in fact, told me that she never registered to vote because she is dyslexic, and didn't think she could read and understand the ballot on election day.

But during the next hour, those women and I discussed each ballot measure, comparing them to the advertisements they had seen, throwing in a few personal experiences. We also looked up information about the candidates running for local offices in Selma. I'm confident that these women will vote in this election. They have some tools to encourage their family and friends to vote. And my dyslexic friend registered to vote and learned that poll workers (or a friend she invites to come with her), can help her on election day.

Another day I attended a meeting of the Fresno County Voter Access Advisory Committee. This committee is made up of the Fresno County Registrar of Voters, Brandi

Orth, her department heads, representatives of local advocacy groups for the disabled, and other interested participants. I am so impressed by Fresno County's willingness to accommodate the needs of voters. Every one of the 280 polling places for the November election will have touch screen and talking screen voting booths and they will have both van-accessible and car-accessible parking places for the handicapped. The Elections Office provides ramps, thresholds, signs, and trained and helpful poll workers to make it possible for anyone who wants to, to vote. Even if a voter does not wish to leave their vehicle, poll workers are instructed to help them vote.



With each voter who is accommodated on election day, I believe there is a cadre of friends, helpers, and family members who receives the message that in our county, no voter will be left out. This is the same message I take away when I work on behalf of the League, sorting mailed-in ballots or answering phones in the elections office.

We are looking for ways to include ballots, and to get voters to vote. The League's work, like that of the elections office, is to **INCLUDE** votes and voters in the elections process.

REMINDER: Volunteers are needed NOW to open and sort mailed-in ballots and answer phones in the elections office.

VAAC (Voter Access Advisory Committee) Representative needed: LWVF member needed for quarterly meetings with County elections officials and disabled advocates to assure access for all voters in Fresno County. If interested in either opportunity, contact Marianne Kast at (559)270-7937, or fourkasts@gmail.com.

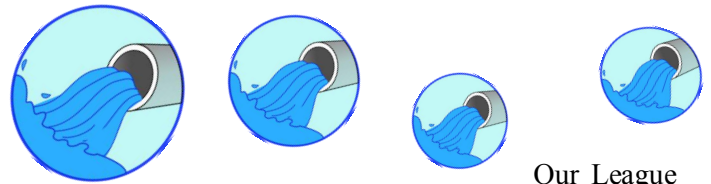
How to Evaluate Ballot Propositions



◆ Do you agree with the measure's goals?
Will it make things better?

- ◆ Check where the money comes from. Who are the real sponsors and opponents?
- ◆ Is it well written, or will it create legal conflicts that may require court resolution?
- ◆ Does it have its own revenue source?

- ◆ Does it mandate a government program without addressing how it will be funded?
- ◆ Does it deal with an issue that can be decided Yes or No or is it more complex?
- ◆ If it amends the Constitution, does it really belong there? Constitutional amendments require voter approval.
- ◆ Be wary of distortion tactics and half truths.



If you read a recent article in the Fresno Bee about the City of Fresno's water system, you might be under the impression that the City of Fresno gets most of its surface water from the San Joaquin River, but in "normal" water years about one-third (up to 60,000 acre feet) of the city's surface water comes from the San Joaquin River, while about two-thirds (120,000 acre feet) comes from the Kings River.

The city receives both water allocations through the Fresno Irrigation District . This agency is one of the Friant Water Authority contractors that receives water allotments through the Central Valley Project , while the Kings River water allocations are handled locally through the Kings River Water Association, of which the Fresno Irrigation District is a member.

Fresno Irrigation and other contractors have been hard hit during the drought. Much, if not all, of the Fresno's surface water allocation comes out of the Friant Class 1 allocation. According to the Pacific Institute's August 2015 report on "Impacts of California's Ongoing Drought: Agriculture," the Friant Authority received 50% of its Class 1 allocation in 2012, 62% in 2013, and 0 % in 2014. With 2015 being a critically dry year, the dire surface water allocation situation is continuing to put a strain on critically over-drafted groundwater supplies. With the reductions in the Central Valley's water deliveries, Fresno is fortunate to have access to surface water from the Kings River, even though Kings River water deliveries have also been reduced during the drought.

Our League is continuing to keep abreast of the local water issues we highlighted in an April letter to the LWVC including groundwater overdraft, widespread well failures, deteriorating water quality, land subsidence, and the impact on disadvantaged communities.

Our activities include:

- ◆ Providing input to LWVC's Water Committee. Diane Merrill is our representative on the committee.
- ◆ Attending meetings on implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) in Fresno County. Currently there is a SGMA Working Group chaired by the County that is exploring ways to form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies for all the three critically over-drafted groundwater sub-basins in Fresno County.
- ◆ Keeping abreast of the water infrastructure improvement projects in Fresno to improve water supply and quality and to conserve water.
- ◆ Communications with the local office of the Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability about social justice issues relating to water and disadvantaged communities.
- ◆ Following developments with the California Water Commission's Water Storage Investment Program (\$2.7 billion Prop 1 water bond funding). We are hoping that water agencies in Fresno County will be able to develop groundwater recharge/groundwater storage/conjunctive water use projects that are competitive for the Investment program's funding.

GIVE BACK TO YOUR LEAGUE AND YOUR COMMUNITY



Register voters

Open mail-in ballots

Answer phones

Attend City Council or Board of Supervisor sessions

Train to be a substitute treasurer

Call 226-8683 and tell us what you would like to do!

Housing

by Patience Milrod



Last month, readers here learned how proactive rental inspections would require Fresno landlords to maintain their rental properties, because safe and healthy housing protects families' health and wellbeing, improves educational and employment outcomes, and increases property values throughout the City.

Since January, tenant advocates have given policymakers multiple examples of successful models from many other cities, and the Mayor has brought national experts to testify to the advantages and feasibility of such policies. But landlords have drawn a line in the sand, rejecting universal baseline inspections that would both reveal who's a slumlord, and allow the city to focus enforcement resources.

So as of November, 2016, slumlords can still exact with impunity, from thousands of Fresno families, well over half their meager monthly incomes—in exchange for medieval housing conditions created by landlord neglect. And still, there is no inspection ordinance pending before the City Council.

Advocates have asked: "What if the City simply enforced ordinances that already exist?" But some code inspectors are dedicated, some may not be. They have varying qualifications; they use different techniques and standards to identify and report violations. Fresno's Code Division has e-tablet technology, but does not use it—so a month may pass between inspection and violation notice.

Code enforcement staff's (unsurprising) low morale—and their poor performance—is on city leaders. Many other cities have figured this out, and ours could too, if there were will—and leadership. Every elected city leader has a responsibility to every family in Fresno to enforce the laws. Failure to enforce allows slumlords to maximize profits unlawfully, leaves families to suffer, subjects children to unsafe conditions and frequent moves, and costs parents jobs.

Let your council member and the Mayor know it's past time for the City to enact comprehensive baseline inspections of rental units throughout Fresno.

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



Prior to its October meeting the Behavioral Health Board held a Public Hearing on the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Annual Update for the current year. Department of Behavioral Health gave a review of the changes to the plan. Community members were given the opportunity to make comments and ask questions. During its meeting the Board discussed and approved the Annual Update. It now will be sent to Fresno County Board of Supervisors for their approval, then on to the state Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission.

At its meeting, the Board heard from two local members of the state commission who recently were appointed by the governor—Reneeta Anthony and Lynne Ashbeck. The Commission writes regulations, approves innovation plans, monitors compliance, and provides oversight for counties to follow the intent of the MHSA.

This month the Board visited the Prevention and Early Intervention Perinatal Program. The program provides outpatient mental health services to mothers experiencing mood disorders as a result of pregnancy, up to one year postpartum. Mothers are offered therapy, case management, and medication services. The goal is to help mothers return to their pre-pregnancy levels of functioning and prevent decompensation, resulting in chronic mental health problems. Mothers also are taught techniques for bonding with their infants during group activities. The program is being expanded to include fathers. During its meeting the Board received Outcomes Reports from the Perinatal Program that shows a marked decrease in the severity of clients' depression, as well as for their need for crisis services and hospitalization.

For its November 16 meeting, the Board will be moving to the newly purchased Sierra Building, at 1925 E. Dakota Avenue. All are invited to attend.

Education

by Kay Bertken



**Next FUSD Board Meetings
Wednesday, November 9, 16**

The mood at Board meetings and the mood of this year's Fresno Unified's "State of Education" luncheon could not have been more different. The luncheon, which raised \$24,000 for scholarships for Fresno Unified students, was positive about improvements in student outcome measures and in student accomplishments Board meetings, on the other hand, have evidenced conflict of interest charges against Trustee Ashjian and prolonged arguments over the District's Measure X, a facilities bond.

A Merced attorney working for a group he has identified as Fresno Watchdogs for Ethical Bidding accused Trustee Ashjian of conflicts of interest and inappropriately voting on FUSD projects in which his firm was directly engaged or projects being done by contractors with whom his firm was identified. Fallout from those accusations interrupted the Board's consideration of Superintendent Hanson's evaluation.

Those discussions resulted in Trustee Ashjian recusing himself from a project vote with a declaration of his conflict while commenting that it was somehow silly. The Merced attorney showed up again at the next Board meeting to assert that the District ought to file a complaint with the Fair Political Practices Board about Ashjian changing the record of his vote on a project from approval to an abstention in the minutes.

Trustees Ashjian and Mills have registered "no" votes on proposals to build a new elementary school in the southeast part of the district to relieve overcrowding, against the updated high school site plans, and against the general recommended Measure X project list provided by the facilities staff. The two trustees are leading participants in a campaign against the bond, a novelty in recent bond history.

Trustee Mills has accused staff of making its recommendations without community input and particularly proposing a new second gym for Fresno High, which she says her community does not want. She accuses staff of breaking promises, presumably by not including new Fresno High classroom buildings on this bond and preclud-

ing their eventual construction by the placement of the new gym. Fresno Unified staff says the gym has been moved only slightly from its original approved site plan placement, which was discussed in multiple community meetings. The new plan, in fact, saves two tennis courts from demolition.

Trustee Ashjian did indicate that he thought it positive that the District could take this opportunity to reduce property taxes. The staff indicated that if Bond Measure X passes, tax bills would drop by \$3.00 per \$100,000 of assessed valuation in the first year, going up gradually over the years of the measure.

He also has argued that the bond ought to list the specific priority order of the proposed projects. The staff has asserted that emergencies, state funding and state project approvals would have to be taken into consideration, but that the schools with the most portable classrooms would be prioritized among the portable replacement projects.

Some people think that the lack of support from the Fresno High and Bullard High area trustees may reflect less concern for areas of the city not their own. Fresno High and Bullard were the major high school recipients of Measure Q funding. Measure X is more balanced, if not slightly weighted toward schools that were less targeted by Measure Q.

The League Board has voted to support Bond Measure X, as it has most school bond measures.

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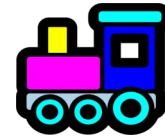
Marijuana ((continued from page 1)

Cannabis use has been increasing in all age groups across the country since 2000. The four states that have legalized marijuana have cooperated in developing a "best practices" model for insuring safety of marketed cannabis products; this model has been incorporated into Proposition 64 as the Office of Cannabis Safety, a division of the Department of Public Health.



Transportation

By Stephenie Frederick



Measure C, Fresno County's half-cent transportation sales tax, funds many kinds of efforts – for example, public transit, vanpools, paratransit for people with disabilities, street maintenance, airports, school bus replacement. Perhaps most exciting is the "New Technology Reserve" which has been accumulating tax proceeds since 2007.

In 2016, this reserve, which had accumulated \$10 million, went from quiescent to dramatic, as a group of qualified, representative reviewers evaluated six proposals and recommended funding for five of them.

The goal of the New Technology Reserve is to "finance new transit technologies" – for example, personal rapid transit (the little pod cars on guideways you see at some airports). At the behest of the Fresno Council of Governments, a working group developed a request for proposals for

"advanced transit projects . . . that would advance public transit and transportation . . . and have the potential for broad benefits to Fresno County residents," including improved air quality.

The RFP invited projects in the areas of research, development, demonstration, and deployment. The final document was approved by the Fresno Council of Governments Policy Board and by the board of the Fresno County Transportation Authority, which administers Measure C

A Multidisciplinary Advisory Group was formed to evaluate the proposals that were eventually submitted. The League was represented in this group. After studying the proposals exhaustively, the Group made the following funding recommendations:

Proposer	Amount Sought	Amount Awarded
Sustainable Aviation (Reedley, Mendota et al) Electric-aircraft flight training; network of electric aircraft charging stations (first in the world)	\$1,071,348	100%
Transportation Institute, CSU Fresno New research-education institute to serve San Joaquin Valley, assist Fresno County cities-county with effective transportation projects.	\$3,722,361	80%
FAX Innovations Near-zero-emissions engines; transmission retrofits.	\$6,551,550	5%
Electric School Buses (Sanger et al) Replace diesel with electric buses to demonstrate viability of electric fleets; create charging-station network; sell battery power to grid at peak prices, buy at off-peak.	\$2,412,741	50%
Fresno County Rural Transit Agency Place new electric buses on express routes between rural county cities and Fresno; solar-powered charging stations.	\$5,076,581	50%
Bike-Car Sharing (Shared-Use Mobility) Survey downtown Fresno residents about bike-car sharing; suggest possible programs; create app for making trips using several modes of travel.	\$ 500,000	0%

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November 8
Election Day





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Men and Women of Voting Age Making Democracy Work

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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.

Yearly Dues Individual - \$70 ~ Family - \$100 (2 members, same address) ~ Student - \$30

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

.....
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It's Time for Our Holiday Party

Sunday, December 4
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