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# The *Fresno* **VOTER**

## EDUCATED VOTERS ARE SMART VOTERS!

Go to [Votersedge.org/ca](http://Votersedge.org/ca)

Attend these upcoming events

### Sunday October 2

Voter Registration  
CenCalVia Open Streets—A Family Friendly Event  
11 a.m.—3 p.m.  
Ventura St @ Cedar, Fresno



### Tuesday, October 4

Ballot Issues Presentation  
National Women's Political Caucus Meeting  
6:30 dinner, 7 p.m. League speakers  
Toledo's 367 East Shaw, Fresno



### Wednesday, October 5

Walk & Roll Mayoral Candidates Forum  
7 p.m., Bitwise Auditorium, 700 Van Ness,  
Fresno

### Thursday, October 6

Engaging in Democracy—Panel for Stone Soup Parents  
10 a.m. speakers: 11:15 a.m. lunch  
1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno

### Thursday, October 20

Ballot issues presentation  
Clovis Democratic Club Meeting  
Seven Restaurant, 25 Shaw, Clovis  
5:30 Dinner, 6:15 League speakers



Monday, October 17  
Regular Board Meeting  
5 p.m., League Office

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

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

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

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



# President's Message



I attended a celebration of Constitution Day on September 17 at Fresno State sponsored by the Fresno County Civic Learning Partnership, of which the League is a member, Fresno County Office of Education, Fresno State and several co-sponsors, including the League.

Lt. Col. Lorenzo Rios, chief executive officer for the Clovis Veterans Memorial District, and Mark Keppler, executive director of the Maddy Institute at Fresno State, gave informational and inspiring opening remarks on the Constitution and Civic Responsibility.

The remainder of the time was spent on two panel discussions. The panels were composed of college professors, attorneys, community leaders and college and high school students. Each member of panel one addressed the question "What Constitutional rights are you concerned about in this election?" Panel two addressed "Why does your vote matter?" and "How can you participate besides voting?"

All panelists were very good, but I was particularly impressed by the students. They were composed and articulated well and with passion on their own views on the topics. Following each panel presentation, members of the audience, seated at round tables, discussed the same questions. Seated at my table was an attorney, a parent of a panelist and several students, two of whom were panelists. One of the student panelists was Andrew Dadasovich, the Vice President of our Student Unit, and the other was Nina Narahiri, a junior at University High School and currently a member of the Fresno Youth Commission.

I was impressed and moved by the student responses. One young girl was from a family of Mexican immigrants who recently gained citizenship. She said that she takes her right to vote very seriously for two reasons: first, it is so precious because she and her family worked so hard to earn it, and second, because she votes for all those immigrants who can't vote. Another young man who was too young said he could hardly wait to cast his first vote. As all of the tables reported on their discussions, it was apparent that they, too, had similar experiences.

*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. 10 \* Editor: Francine Farber**

## Member News

*Please Note Changes in Your Roster*

### New Member

**Sal Quintero  
Fresno City Council  
2600 Fresno Street  
Fresno, CA 93721**

### In Memoriam

**We sincerely regret to announce the passing of Hal Tokmakian, a League member since 1984. He was 89 and died on September 20. He was Professor Emeritus of Urban and Regional Planning at Fresno State. His wife, Barbara, also deceased, was president of LWVF from 1985-87.**

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

**LWVF**

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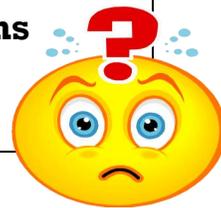
**The League is now a 501 ©(3) non-profit organization so your dues payments and donations are tax deductible and gratefully accepted.**



**Thank You!**

## A Very, Very Quick Guide to Those 17 Confusing Ballot Propositions

Go to [votersedge.org/ca](http://votersedge.org/ca) for more info and to learn who supports them



**51 School Bonds :** Authorizes \$9 billion in general obligation bonds; \$3 billion for new construction and \$3 billion for modernization of K-12 public school facilities; \$1 billion for charters schools and vocational education; \$2 billion for community colleges

**52 State Fees on Hospitals:** Requires two-thirds vote of legislature to amend existing fees on hospitals re Medi-Cal matching funds

**53 Revenue Bonds:** Requires statewide voter approval for state owned or operated projects if the bond is over \$2 billion

**54 Legislative Proceedings:** Legislature cannot pass any bill unless it has been printed and published on the Internet for at least 72 hours except in cases of public emergency

**55 Tax Extension:** Extends personal income tax increases for wealthiest payers which go toward funding schools and certain healthcare programs

**56 Cigarette Tax:** Increases cigarette tax by \$2.00 per pack toward funding for healthcare and tobacco use prevention programs

**57 Criminal Sentences:** Allows parole consideration for persons convicted of nonviolent felonies upon completion of prison term for primary offense

**58 English Language Instruction:** Repeals requirements that these classes be taught predominantly in English and provides structured immersion program where other native languages could be used

**59 Citizens United:** An advisory measure asking voters if they want California officials to overturn Citizens United, a campaign finance ruling, by proposing and ratifying an amendment to the U.S. Constitution

**60 Adult Films:** Requires performers in adult films to use condoms, and to have medical exams related to sexually transmitted infections

**61 State Prescription Drug Purchases:** Prohibits state agencies from paying more than the lowest price paid for the same drug by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs.

**62 Death Penalty:** Repeals the death penalty and replaces it with life imprisonment without possibility of parole

**63 Firearms:** Prohibits possession of large-capacity ammunition magazines and requires individual background check to purchase ammunition. Sales to be made through licensed vendors.

**64 Marijuana:** Legalizes marijuana and hemp and establishes regulations for marketing marijuana products

**65 Carry-out Bags:** Requires stores to deposit bag sale proceeds to Wildlife fund for environmental projects

**66 Death Penalty:** Imposes time limit, and other procedures, on state courts for death penalty review

**67 Plastic bags:** A challenge to the state law prohibiting stores from providing single-use bags; permits sale of reusable bags

### LWVC supports:

Prop 51

Prop 54

Prop 55

Prop 57

Prop 58

Prop 63

Prop 67

### LWVC opposes:

Prop 59

Prop 65

Prop 66

### LWVC No Position

Prop 52

Prop 53

Prop 61

Prop 64

### LWVC Neutral

Prop 56

*See page 7 for tips on evaluating ballot props*

# Housing

by Patience Milrod



Lee Brand and Henry Perea are in a close race to succeed Mayor Ashley Swearengin, who leaves office in January. What would each do, as Mayor, about Fresno's housing crisis?

Both candidates say they know we need affordable housing, and effective enforcement of housing codes to eliminate slums. But their proposals—in response to Central Valley Progressive PAC's questionnaire—offer scanty detail.

Brand focuses on the supply side of the problem: "If the City could provide up to 1,000 new affordable housing units per year it would start to see a significant reduction in slum housing within a few years." Perea claims "slumlords will finally be held accountable" and "these current slum-type housing options will cease" under his administration, but only for the "worst slumlord offenders."

But recent *Fresno Bee* reporting has highlighted why any new initiative *must* include a baseline inspection program to identify all slumlords.

See Vang, her husband, and their 9 children lived in a Southeast Fresno apartment for three years prior to a July 2017 termination notice. That notice arrived soon after the Vangs' complaints to code enforcement about apartment conditions. Code inspectors found that the coin-operated washing machine in the building's laundry room was miswired and unsafe to use—among many other problems. Landlord Cecilia Chan told the *Bee* that she was evicting the Vangs because "the apartment does not have the washer and dryer hookup, and she'd been using [her own] washing machine in the kitchen." The Chans do not lack resources for maintenance: Kevin Hall found an estimated \$10 million in rental properties through recent research.

Evictions often follow tenants' complaints about illegal conditions in rental housing. Although retaliatory eviction is also illegal, poor tenants rarely can assert their rights: one study reports 90% of landlords have legal representation, while 90% of tenants do not. We cannot rely on tenants to report landlords' slum practices. I believe that we must implement a

systematic code inspection program that requires a baseline  
**4** inspection of all rental units older than 5 years.

# Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



Members of the Behavioral Health Board (BHB) were provided with copies of the Mental Health Services Act Annual Update. The draft, which was completed by the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) staff, following a series of community stakeholders' meetings, has been posted for the 30-day review and comment period. Beginning on September 17, meetings were held to review the update with the community and receive input. A Public Hearing will be held by the BHB at 1:30 pm prior to its regular meeting on October 19 at the Blue Sky Wellness Center. League members are encouraged to read the Annual Update and submit any comments to DBH by email, US Post Office, or phone.

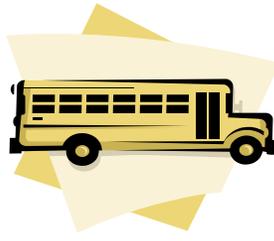
BHB members were happy to learn that DBH has contracted with Exodus Recovery, Inc. to staff its Access Line on a 24/7 basis. Previously, DBH staff answered the line during working hours, but an answering service responded after hours. The Exodus staff who answer the Access Line are familiar with local services and can provide appropriate referral and linkage information to callers. Already the volume of calls has exceeded expectations. The Access Line phone number is 800-654-3937.

BHB received the Outcomes Report from Comprehensive Addiction Programs, Inc. (CAP). CAP provides residential detoxification, stabilization, and pre-treatment for substance use disorders, residential rehabilitation treatment services, an aftercare program, and a sober living facility. Prior to the meeting board members visited the site to see the facilities, meet staff, and observe programming. It was noted that seeing the programs prior to receiving the Outcomes Reports is extremely helpful.

This is a reminder that you also are encouraged to participate in Drug MediCal Redesign by attending a stakeholders' meeting or sending your comments to DBH online. More information is available on the Substance Use Disorder web site.

# Education

by Kay Bertken



**Next FUSD Board Meetings**

**Wednesday, October 12**

**Wednesday, October 26**

Drama has returned to Fresno Unified after a short period of quiet over the summer break. Differences between Superintendent Hanson and Trustee Brooke Ashjian have surfaced in community meetings about the upcoming Fresno Unified School Bond Measure X.

## **Superintendent's Evaluation**

The FTA has accused the superintendent of trying to strategically time his yearly evaluation in order to beat revelations from the as yet quiescent investigation. The evaluation was abruptly cancelled prior to the closed session meeting for which it was scheduled due to an undisclosed but “unprecedented” and “complicated” legal matter.

During the 9/14 public meeting, after long discussion and questioning by Trustees Mills and Ashjian, the two voted unexpectedly against the purchase of land for a new school that would relieve the overcrowded conditions in southeast Fresno elementary and high schools.

## **School Bond Measure**

Measure X, a school bond measure that will appear on the November ballot, was anticipated by the District's Facilities Master Plan to follow Measure Q and continue the billion dollars worth of documented work described to upgrade and maintain Fresno schools. The measure will raise \$225 million and will replace a retiring bond and so will not raise current property taxes.

Trustee Ashjian currently is demanding a specific list of projects that will be covered by the bond—a replication of the approach of a former FUSD bond, Measure K. That bond listed specific projects—many of which were irrelevant to the schools or were rendered inappropriate over the time period of the bond construction projects.

Enumeration also tied the hands of project planners who might have been able to pursue projects to take advantage of construction efficiencies or matching fund opportunities. Given the current area-centric nature of some of the current trustees, specifying projects could provide the basis for endless debate among trustees and among voters.

## **Lease-leaseback rulings vary**

Beyond the controversies enveloping the Board, significant state-wide events are beginning to clarify the lease-leaseback construction debacle that has absorbed Fresno over the last year. A ruling in one district California Appellate Court relative to lease-leaseback contracts in the Los Alamitos School District (2014) reached the opposite conclusion from that rendered by the appellate court in our local Davis case (2014). In April of this year another appellate court hearing a second case involving lease-leaseback contracts in Los Angeles supported the Los Alamitos

ruling and explicitly rejected the Davis court conclusions over most of the same issues.

## **State Considering Bill**

Because of the number of cases occupying the courts and the contrary rulings that have left school districts and contractors around the state floundering, the California State Legislature has taken up the issue and is working on a bill (AB2216) that will clarify the law regarding these contracts. The most important feature of the bill, beyond confirming the lease-leaseback option, is to declare that contractors who have built schools under such a contract are entitled to compensation and need not return their fees. The bill also provides for a method for competition for these contracts based on a “best value” criterion rather than simply low cost. “Best value” is to be determined on the basis of district specified criteria that can include competence and history. It also provides for pre-construction contracts.

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Want to hear for yourself?

Attend the Board meetings at the FUSD office, 2309 Tulare St., Fresno

Watch live streaming on your computer at the Fresno Unified website

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**Dues letters have  
been mailed for October.  
When you get yours, please  
respond promptly.**



# Transportation

By Stephenie Frederick



Two Democrats, one an assembly member, the other a state senator, have released proposed legislation that specifies a plan to fund the repair of California's crumbling bridges, highways, and roads. Jim Frazier and Jim Beall propose to use a range of mechanisms to raise these badly needed funds and break out of a year of deadlock over the issue. The Beall-Frazier proposal would:

- ◆ Increase the gasoline excise tax by 17 cents per gallon, going from 39.5 cents to 56. cents per gallon if the proposal were adopted
- ◆ End the Board of Equalization's practice of adjusting gasoline and diesel excise taxes so that sales yield the same revenue as under a previous tax scheme. This practice causes huge, unpredictable swings in revenue from year to year
- ◆ Increase the diesel excise tax by 30 cents per gallon
- ◆ Increase vehicle registration fees by \$38 per year
- ◆ Impose registration fees on zero-emission vehicles
- ◆ Increase truck weight fees
- ◆ Increase diesel sales tax
- ◆ Tap into unallocated cap-and-trade funds
- ◆ Obtain funds from other, miscellaneous sources

The proposed legislation also rearranges some facets of transportation governance within the state government, exempts projects from CEQA if they are already in a roadway, creates a program to address deferred maintenance on state and local roadways, and suggests several other changes.

It is impossible to tell whether the proposal will gain enough support from assembly and state senate Republicans to become law. However, a strong coalition that includes the California Chamber of Commerce originally suggested many of the elements now contained in the Frazier-Beall proposal, so one would think the coalition is likely to champion it – and influence the Republicans whose support is needed.

If the proposed legislation were to become law, Fresno County and its fifteen incorporated cities would receive approximately \$69,812,000 every year for several transportation purposes. High on the list, of course, would be road repair.

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## Student Unit

by Lisa Bryant

The Student Unit has been busy planning for the current semester and into the Spring. We are already in the process of organizing exciting Presidential debate viewing parties complete with “fact check trivia” and lively after-viewing conversation. We recruited members and registered voters during Welcome Back

Days and we are going to be doing lots of voter registration in the next couple of weeks, including on National Voter Registration Day. **However, priority number one has been and continues to be student recruitment!** If you know of any college students at Fresno State that would like to be involved, please have them contact our club Presi-



dent, Alexandra Gallo, at alexgallo13@mail.fresnostate.edu or the faculty advisor, Lisa Bryant, at lbryant@csufresno.edu. Interesting fact: right now the Student Unit has more male than female members!



Proposition 61 on the California ballot in November would limit the price of drugs purchased by the State to the prices negotiated by the Veterans Administration Health Care System. This proposal arises out of the astute observation that the VA pays on average 40% less for medicines than hospitals and commercial health plans. But extending these prices to other government-funded health plans presents problems.

The VA's bargain prices are not explained by the size of the VA system, which provides active care for only 6 million veterans. This is a relatively small proportion of insured patients in the US. While data is not readily available on the bargaining power of the major commercial pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs), it is certain that many are as large or larger. Kaiser Permanente, which runs its own prescription service, has 11 million patients. It is likely that Express Scripts, CVS Caremark, Optum, Cigna, and several other PBMs are operating on the same scale. Why can't they get the same bargains as the VA? More pointedly, why can't California, with its 4 million patients (most of our MediCal patients get their medications from HMOs), get a better deal?

Besides the scale of purchases, another factor in price negotiations with the pharmaceutical industry is the extent to which a formulary—the list of medicines a PBM is prepared to dispense—is closed. A totally open formulary provides most every drug approved by the FDA. A totally closed formulary provides only those medications which, in principle, are most cost-effective. The VA has traditionally operated the most closed formulary in American medicine.

This has facilitated its bargaining position by signaling to the drug industry that if the price of a drug does not provide marginal advantage over other agents, it will not be purchased.

Restricted formularies are a costly nuisance to independent medical practices and to the PBMs themselves because of the recurring threat of interruptions in treatment (due to changes in patients' health plans) and the need for medically sophisticated channels to obtain non-formulary items. The expectations of physicians and physicians groups, as well as patient expectations (stoked by direct-to-patient drug advertising), forces commercial PBMs to have more open formularies. But in the case of the VA, clinicians are well aware of their formulary and are prepared to deal with its limitations.

There is yet another factor in favor of the VA pharmacy service: its tradition of parsimony. Much like the Canadian Medicare system, it sets budgets and, literally under the force of law, stays within them.

Proposition 61 wants to direct our attention to the bargaining power of the federal government, which, with the exception of the VA, has consistently been thwarted by the formidable pharmaceutical lobby. However, in attempting to appropriate the VA's bargains, Proposition 61 undermines the VA's deal-making position by adding a sizable pool of adventitious customers. Not surprisingly, all veterans groups are vigorously opposing Proposition 61. I think that a better idea would be for health plans and PBMs to vigorously mimic the VA's strategy. The state league is not taking a position on this issue.



## 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.

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**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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