



Phone: 559-226-VOTE

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

# The Fresno *VOTER*



Tuesday, October 27  
Regular Board Meeting  
5 pm. League Office

Monday, November 16  
Note Date Change  
Regular Board Meeting  
5 p.m. League Office

Tuesday, December 15  
Regular Board Meeting  
5 p.m. League Office



Sunday, December 13  
Holiday Party  
Everyone Invited!  
Save the Date!

## Celebrating 75 Years

*In April, 2016 your League will be holding its 75th anniversary celebration.*

*Please support our efforts to make this a gala event.*

*We are working on securing a very special speaker at a very special site! We know you will want to be part of this day.*

*Your support through generous donations is welcome. As you know from our recent letter, we have decided to dedicate the anniversary celebration to Rosellen Kershaw, twice a president of LWWF and an outstanding community activist.*

*Please send your donations or reserve an advertisement on the form you received last month.*

*Your anniversary committee,*

- Francine Farber, Chair
- Patty Campbell
- Stephenie Frederick
- Nyla Zender

# President's Message



I am pleased to report significant progress the League has made towards realizing one of our goals. For some time we planned to become active in social media, and thanks to the leadership of Dr. Lisa Bryant, the faculty advisor for the LWV Student Unit at Fresno State, we are well on our way. Dr. Bryant has conducted training sessions for a number of our Board and other members and we have now created an LWV Fresno Facebook page.

Dr. Bryant has worked with Board Members on how to enter information in all of our programs areas, how to share messages from the State and National Leagues, and how to post important news items, videos and images that will be interesting and educational to all of our members and many others with similar interests. Broadening our audience can not only get our message out, but may also increase and diversify our membership.

If you are active on Facebook, check out the League page and encourage your non-League friends to do the same.

Another item of interest was the celebration of Constitution Day at Fresno State on September 17. This year a group the League is working with, the Civic Learning Partnership, was invited to help design the program. This group is reaching out to all local schools from K – 12 to help make Civic Learning more effective for all students.

Speakers included Juan Arambula, former Assemblyman, attorney and school board member; Esmeralda Soria, Fresno City Council; Honorable Rosendo Pena, Jr., Justice on the California Fifth District Court of Appeal; Lorenzo Rios, Chief Executive Officer, Clovis Veterans Memorial District; and Ismail Ali, Fresno State Alum and UC Berkeley Law Student. The community dialogue that followed was spirited, engaging and lead to many great suggestions for ways to improve Civic Learning.

Outside the auditorium, Lisa Bryant and her students were handing out League information and were registering voters. Good job, Lisa and the Student Unit.

*Nyla*

**The VOTER is a monthly publication of the League of Women Voters of Fresno**  
**Mailing Address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710**  
**Volume 74, No. 10 \* Editor: Francine Farber**

## Member News

Please note changes in  
your roster

### Carol Ann Bequette

We regret to note the passing of Carol Ann Bequette on September 7. Carol was an LWVF member since 1991. A retired teacher and principal, she was active in many community organizations, including National Women's Political Caucus. Carol was a member of the editorial board of the Community Alliance newspaper. Memorial donations in her name made be made to our League.

### New Address

Jennifer and Hugh Williamson

2510 East Eclipse

Fresno, CA 93720

575-8297

We are now a 501 (c) (3) so all dues and donations are tax deductible and also much appreciated. Make checks out to LWVF and send to

**Treasurer, LWVF**

**1345 Bulldog Lane**

**Fresno, CA 93710**

***Get Ready!!!***

We're planning LWVF's 75th  
anniversary gala

April, 2016

Have some suggestions?

Call Francine

226-5455

# Voter Services

by Marianne Kast



To volunteer you can reach Marianne at [fourkasts@gmail.com](mailto:fourkasts@gmail.com) or 559-270-7937.

September celebrated both National Voter Registration Day and two weeks of California High School Voter Registration. By the end of the month we had registered at least 600 more young people to vote.

Alex Padilla, California Secretary of State, visited the Fresno area to mark High School Registration weeks. Padilla addressed an assembly of Parlier HS senior students, reminding them that when they (and all the Central Valley) register and become a significant voting bloc, their issues will begin to be addressed by legislators. We joined with the Fresno County Registrar of

Voters' office and *Mi Familia Vota* to register the Parlier students.

Brandi Orth, Fresno County Registrar of Voters, has asked us to consider partnering with her office to make the use of County voting equipment (voting booths, official ballot boxes) available to high schools for their student body and other elections. Orth believes that having students use the actual voting equipment in school will demystify the voting process and will encourage them to vote as they become adults. The details have to be worked out, but this is an opportu-

nity for the League to be part of a highly hands-on kind of civic education.

AB 1461, California's New Motor Voter law has been approved by the legislature, but awaits Governor Brown's signature before becoming law. The new law would automatically register to vote anyone eligible who is issued or renews a driver's license in California. Republicans opposed the legislation, claiming that the automatic voter registration would lead to voter fraud. Governor Brown worries that the DMV will not be able to gear up fast enough to manage the huge voter database, having just adjusted to licensing non-citizens to drive.

# Behavioral Health

by Francine Farber



The Behavioral Health Board now numbers 12 members, one of whom is a supervisor.. The latter position rotates among several supervisors, who are notable by their absence except for Brian Pacheco, who has attended and stayed the course.

Two community forums are planned. These are opportunities for interested residents to tell us what is good about Department of Behavioral Health programs, what is lacking, and bring specific issues to the Department's attention. The community input is always fascinating. The next forum is set for Kingsburg on October 8, from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Kingsburg Li-

**Regular BHB meetings:** Third Wednesday, 2:30 p.m., Blue Sky

**Adult Services:** First Monday, 10 a.m., Blue Sky

**Children's Services:** Fourth Thursday, 9 a.m., Comprehensive Youth Services, 3747 East Shields

**Justice Services:** Bimonthly, Second Monday, 1:30 p.m., Blue Sky

**Substance Use Disorder Services:**

brary at 1399 Draper Street. The second is for residents of the Fresno metro area on Wednesday, November 18 at Blue Sky Wellness Center, 1617 East Saginaw, 2:30 p.m. The public is welcome to attend.

The BHB approved new by-laws which will go to the Board of Supervisors for approval before the end of the calendar year. This will enable the new board to elect permanent officers.



There are new things happening in Fresno Unified in addition to the long-running controversy around the lease-leaseback contract for Gaston Middle School. The federal Grand Jury has issued subpoenas – presumably investigating the possibility of criminal activity—covering a wide range of documents, emails, cell phone conversations related to lease-leaseback contracts with Harris Construction and Bush Construction. The District has hired a former school superintendent who has worked with the District before to help the financial and operations departments as they deal with the collection of material.

### Test results dismal, but expected

In the midst of that, new efforts continue in the district. The State has released 2014-2015 testing results for the new computer-based Smarter Balanced Assessments that have been developed to assess the new Common Core standards. As predicted, the scores generally reflected lower proficiency than previous tests, reflecting both the new standards and the new computer based testing process. Only 44% of California students met or exceeded English/Language Arts (ELA) standards, and 33% met or exceeded them in math.

More than the generally lower achievement, the test results across the state reflected persistent achievement gaps for low income students, English Learners, Hispanic and African American sub-populations. The percentage meeting or exceeding standards for low income students was 31% on the ELA and 21% on Math; English Learners, 11% and 11%; Hispanic students 32% and 21%, African American students 28% and 16%.

### Sub-populations score even lower

In Fresno Unified, the figures were lower, in part reflecting our large number of these subpopulations, but showing lower scores even for those groups. In Fresno the overall percentage meeting or exceeding standards on the ELA was 27%, Math was 18%. Among low income students, the proportions were

24% and 15%, English Learners, 2% and 3%; Hispanic students 24% and 15%; African American students 28% and 16%. The administration is optimistic that improvement will occur with experience with the new curriculum and tests.

### State considers multiple markers

The State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Schools are considering how they will incorporate the new tests in a new Academic Performance Index (API) of school and district achievement.

The old system used only the state test scores. The new accountability measure will incorporate multiple measures. Exactly what those will be and how they will be incorporated and reported is as yet undetermined., but measures being considered include Advanced Placement test results, graduation rates, attendance and expulsion rates, the equitable distribution of qualified teachers and Common Core implementation. Fresno Unified has already promised the Federal government that it will track and include many of these measures and more in its waiver from the No Child Left Behind federal requirements

### Culturally enriching field trips

Among new initiatives in Fresno Unified that have been funded by the new State funding formula is nearly \$2 million dollars for elementary school field trip programs that aim to compensate for the fact that many of our students do not have the life experiences that contribute to school and test achievement. This year, for the first time, all 6<sup>th</sup> graders in FUSD will attend a week away at science camp; all 3<sup>rd</sup> graders will go out to the San Joaquin River; all 4<sup>th</sup> graders will go to the Monterey Bay Aquarium and the mission at San Juan Bautista; and all 5<sup>th</sup> graders will go to the Exploratorium or the California Academy of Science in San Francisco, or the Technical Museum of Innovation in San Jose. This represents an important experiment in equalizing the educational outcomes for children from low income families by enriching their extra-curricular lives.

## Health Care

by Richard Bertken, M.D.



“Your copay for this prescription will be 682 dollars,” says the pharmacy assistant. You are stunned. You had no idea that your health insurance had such a gaping hole. What will you do about it?

It is a dilemma facing many Medicare D and Obamacare exchange patients. All too often there is no solution except *not* getting a costly medication that may have proven value for your condition. In my practice, the inaccessibility of prescriptions due to unaffordable copays has grown with the expansion of exchange health plans fostered by Obamacare, although it has always been a problem with non-supplemented Medicare D plans.

This dilemma originates in the stunning cost of new drugs (ranging from \$12,000 to \$120,000 yearly—or more). These “megadrugs” surface unpredictably, requiring prescription benefit plans (PBPs, such as Caremark or Accredo) to tailor their complex drug listings frequently so that they can continue to make a profit. These changes are at least annual events, and sometimes occur between enrollment periods. The PBP may increase copays and deductibles generally within their plan, restrict access to expensive drugs by requiring detailed pre-authorization by the physician (this is universal), or increase copays for specific expensive drugs, often by charging a percentage rather than a flat-rate copay. This latter approach is what leads to staggering copays. A thirty per cent copay for a monthly \$2000 medication is asking for \$600 a month. While exchange plans have limitations on annual total out-of-pocket expenses, this expense, along with premium payments, can still

lead to medical bankruptcy. This is the very event that Obamacare intended to prevent.

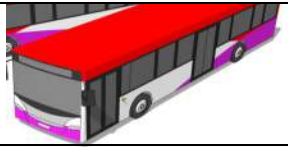
The president has expressed regret that the Affordable Care Act did not specify address drug costs directly. But addressing drug costs directly is exactly what the pharmaceutical industry will not allow. Their lobbying force has denied the FDA the ability to evaluate the value—the cost-effectiveness—of medications brought before its board. Their lobbying has required Medicare and Medicaid to cover all medications approved by the FDA, no matter how low their clinical value.

The heart of the problem is not the behavior of PBP’s, who are protecting their balance sheets, but the low value of many prescription medications. The long-term solution will require our emulating several European countries and Australia in adopting pharmaceutical review boards that categorize drugs according to their value and permit, or even encourage, prescription plans to limit their formularies to drugs of proven cost-effectiveness.

### **FREE HEARING EVALUATIONS**

**Free hearing evaluations are available to the general public through November 20 at Fresno State’s Speech and Hearing Clinic. The evaluations will be held Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

**The evaluations are completed by graduate students in the Department of Communicative Disorders and Deaf Studies who are supervised by licensed and nationally certified audiologists. For information or to make an appointment, e-mail [cddssa@csufresno.edu](mailto:cddssa@csufresno.edu), or call 278-2422. Parking permits are available.**



California's freeways, highways, bridges, roads, and streets need extensive repair. Of five cities in the U.S. with the worst road conditions, four are located in California. Nationwide, California has the second-highest share of roads in poor condition. More than half of California's local bridges – and more than half of its state roads -- need rehabilitation or replacement.

**To repair local streets and roads would require \$78 billion. Caltrans needs \$59 billion to repair state roads.** Those figures are growing by the billions every year. Critical repairs have fallen behind because of income shortfalls.

Federal fuel taxes, last set in 1993, were not indexed to inflation. Had they been indexed, the 18-cent federal gasoline tax adopted at the time would now be 30 cents per gallon – a considerable increase.

Excise taxes imposed on California gasoline purchases are "adjusted" annually to ensure that consumers do not pay any more in overall state taxes at the pump than they would have under a pre-2010 tax structure. We Californians saw tax decreases of six cents per gallon as of July 2, 2015 – a loss of nearly one billion dollars statewide in 2015-2016, just when we need an increase!

Further reducing income, Americans are driving more fuel-efficient cars – and many people oppose tax increases of any kind, preferring to rely on the investments made by previous generations of taxpayers.

**Local, state, and federal government representatives are fighting to increase revenues to repair the country's transportation infrastructure.**

It seems like a battle that should not have to take place. "Fix Our Roads," a diverse coalition of California organizations, estimates that on average, across all of the state's vehicle drivers, each driver pays \$762 per

year on unnecessary gasoline usage and vehicle maintenance – extra costs due entirely to rough road conditions. Why not pay more taxes instead -- and drive on well-paved roads and safe bridges?

**"Fix Our Roads" has proposed a range of strategies to increase funding for roadway repair in California:**

- ◆ Reasonable increases in gasoline and diesel excise taxes;
- ◆ Reasonable increases in vehicle registration and licensing fees;
- ◆ Dedication of a portion of cap-and-trade fees (paid at the pump) to transportation projects that reduce greenhouse emissions (Note: this may simply mean drivable roads, which require less fuel usage).
- ◆ Road-use charges for vehicles that do not use fossil fuels;
- ◆ An end to the annual practice of "adjusting" fuel excise taxes;
- ◆ And -- a special, ongoing problem in California -- repayment of transportation funds diverted to the general fund in past years (\$850 million), and guarantees that such diversions cease immediately and permanently (about \$140 is still diverted annually).

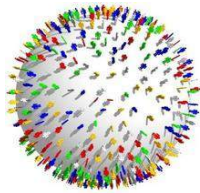
Fresno County's Measure C sales tax provides some funding for roadway repair, but it is not enough. **Measure C Extension runs through 2026; not until then will we have an opportunity to increase the tax.** We also receive funds from the state.

It remains to be seen how California will fund its state and local roadway maintenance. We have seen in recent weeks strong Republican opposition to increasing fuel taxes, and strong energy company opposition to Governor Brown's attempt to reduce reliance on fossil fuels in California.

The situation is similar at the federal level. Congress has not been able to pass a new federal transportation bill. On July 31<sup>st</sup>, the Senate extended the existing bill for three months, hoping that this will give Congress time to devise a permanent solution to the problem of declining funds.

# Technology fund proposal advances for 2016

by Mary Savala



The Council of Governments committee charged with designing a Request for Proposal (RFP) or Advanced Transit Technology Reserved Funds (Advanced Tech) concluded its work on September 10 with recommendations for an RFP to be issued by first of 2016.

The recommendations will include recommending that the RFP be issued every two years in order that there be enough accumulation of funds from the Measure C transportation tax to make applying worthwhile. A scoring cut off of 60 points and above will be required to be considered for funding.

The committee also recommends that a scoring committee be appointed to consist of public members to include representatives from the Citizens

Oversight Committee, disadvantaged EJ communities, an eastside Fresno County city, a westside city, an urban resident, the Economic Development Corporation or the Chamber of Commerce, and perhaps someone from a transit consumer point of view.

The scoring committee will be considering weighted criteria for projects which include greenhouse and air pollution emission reductions, energy savings, innovation, replication and regional applicability, public benefits and environmental justice. League Member Stephenie Frederick was called out as a particular public nominee on the scoring committee to represent the League of Women Voters as well as the Citizens Oversight Committee.

The recommendations will now go up through the bureaucracy of the Citizens Oversight Committee, COG subcommittees, COG Policy Board and Fresno County Transportation Agency perhaps emerging in a form not recognizable from the original! Thirty million dollars is at stake in the next 11 years.



October dues notices were sent out two weeks ago. We would appreciate prompt payment so we can maintain our activities.

*Thank you!*

**See us at the movies!**  
We are co-sponsoring a public service announcement supporting parks in Fresno, thanks to the California Endowment. A 30 second video is being shown in all Ed-

wards Theatres at River Park for every performance, through January.



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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**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, Suite 4, Fresno, CA 93710.**

.....  
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