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# The *Fresno* **VOTER**



**Monday, September 21**  
(note date change)  
**Regular Board Meeting**  
**5 p.m., League Office**

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

*We learned with deep regret of the death of Rosellen Kershaw on August 20. Please see tribute on Page 7. We will be accepting donations in memory of Rosellen. Please note her name in your check's memo line.*

*Thank you.*

## **Chief Donis receives award at Ice Cream Social**

by Francine M. Farber

The annual Ice Cream Social was well-attended despite the triple digit evening heat on August 18. Our Peterson scholarship winners spoke from the heart about their appreciation of the awards and gave us insights into their backgrounds and goals for the future. Their ambitions range from ag business to social work, speech therapy, law and medicine.



Fire Chief Kerri Donis received the Women’s Equality Day Award. As a student athlete in college she played for softball legend Margie Wright at Fresno State. A friend suggested that with her skill set she would be a great firefighter, which had never occurred to her. She immediately saw its relevance and began the career leading to her present position. Along the way as an engineer she had great fun “parting the seas” as she drove a fire truck through the streets of Fresno.

She had a few special challenges coming in as Fire Chief in a 98% male department. Using softball analogies from her earlier days, she said she came in with three strikes: education, an ambition for promotion in a situation where some are happy to be 30-year firefighters, and her gender. She kept her focus, worked hard, tested well, and finally achieved her goal.

Chief Donis noted that while the public thinks of firefighting as a one-dimensional profession, there are other aspects including training, prevention, investigation and community outreach that are important. She tells her department, “Your safety is non-negotiable,” and places an emphasis on that at all times, while managing the department with the lowest proportion of staff to population in the state. Despite that, the last time there was an open call for firefighters, she received about 3,000 applications.

# President's Message



I have often stated how proud I am of our League for a multitude of reasons. Recently I was reminded of another one, that of the Bette Peterson Scholarship Fund. One of our very generous members, Bette Peterson, has funded ten \$1000 scholarships for the past several years.

The selection committee read dozens of personal statements required in the scholarship applications. They included stories such as:

- ◆ a young man raised in poverty, expelled from high school, incarcerated at 19 years old. He turned things around and now is the first in his family to attend college.
- ◆ a 32 year old woman raised in extreme poverty, was an ESL student but desperately wanted to graduate from high school. Her mother was a single parent with two babies to care for and asked the older daughter to quit high school and help at home. She did school work at home and did graduate, but had no money or support of any kind from home to attend college and ended up getting married and had 5 children. She ultimately became a single parent and decided that the only way to have a good life for her family was to go to college.
- ◆ a young woman raised in a home that was dysfunctional and violent. Her father, addicted to narcotics, left his family. The daughter tried to care for two younger siblings, but at 18 she moved out, becoming homeless. She slept on couches of friends. She got help from a caring teacher and counselors and is now in college dependent on grants and scholarships.
- ◆ a young woman who immigrated to the U.S., spoke no English, had no self-confidence, and certainly had no idea of what college was. Luckily, she had a great mentor and supportive parents and entered college. She works every summer to help pay school expenses and is the first in her family to attend college.

There are many more amazing stories, all of which have moved Bette Peterson to give financial support to these unbelievably strong survivors who just want to find a better way to live.

*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. 9 Editor: Francine Farber**

## Member News

Please note changes in your roster

**To enhance our membership function, a membership committee has been formed. Membership Director Dolores O'Neal is working together with Stephenie Frederick, Terri Figgs, Francine Farber, Jane Worsley and Nyla Zender to more accurately track dues payments and coordinate communication about member status.**

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**

**Want to help?**

**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.

So, voter services volunteers, are you ready? We will be busy registering college and high school students this fall. Additionally, we will seek ways to assist local organizations such as Stone Soup, Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministry, Fresno Native American Health Project and others with voter information and registration. Then, we will be involved with candidate and issues forums as the election year progresses.

The June 6, 2016 primary will choose candidates for the US presidential/vice-presidential election, as well as for a new US senator from California, replacing Barbara Boxer. But wait! The same primary election will choose US congressional representatives for the 4<sup>th</sup> (McClinock), 16<sup>th</sup> (Costa), 21<sup>st</sup> (Valadao), and 22<sup>nd</sup> (Nunes) districts. State Assembly members for the 23<sup>rd</sup> (Patterson) and 31<sup>st</sup> (Perea) districts will be elected.

But that's not all! Fresno County supervisors will be elected for district 2 (Borgeas), district 3 (Perea), and district 5 (Poochigian).

Yes, there's even more! Fresno Mayor Swearingin is termed out; a new mayor will be elected. Fresno City Council members Brandau, Caprioglio, and Brand will be running for re-election or mayor, and fourteen (14!) Superior Court Judges will be elected. Last, there are already two statewide ballot initiatives, one that seeks to overturn the single-use plastic bag ban, and one that proposes a state constitutional amendment increasing support for hospitals that serve Medi-Cal patients.

There is much to do, and to quote the Talmud: "You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it."

## LWVF member joins Medicare rally in Oakland

by Ruth Afifi

On July 30 events in cities across the country celebrated the 50th anniversary of the day Lyndon Johnson signed Medicare into law. In Oakland's Frank Ogawa Plaza, hundreds of supporters gathered, including fifteen of us who left Fresno at 7:30 a.m. on a chartered bus and were later joined by a delegation from Modesto. Other buses brought people from Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, San Jose, Gilroy, Stockton and Sacramento.

Beginning with band music before the rousing speeches, the colorful and lively rally lasted from 11-1. Atten-

dees held signs with messages like *Medicare for All* and *Medicare is as American as Apple Pie*, and many wore t-shirts identifying their unions. State Controller Betty Yee, Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones, civil rights activist Dolores Huerta, S.F. Supervisor Tom Ammiano, and various union leaders and members all gave excellent, short speeches emphasizing PIE to protect, improve, expand Medicare. After the speeches, the crowd marched to a federal building, chanting: "Medicare is under attack. What do we do? We fight back."

"Medicare turns 50" was organized by a coalition including National Nurses United, Physicians for a National Health Program, Campaign for a Healthy California, Healthcare-NOW!, Public Citizen, and others. At the Oakland rally, the California Alliance of Retired Americans representing more than 900,000 members, distributed a flyer saying: "We need to protect and improve Medicare as the highly successful public program it has been for nearly fifty years - and extend its coverage to all. **HEALTH-CARE IS A HUMAN RIGHT.**"



## *Education*

by Kay Bertken



School has started, but the major news around Fresno Unified continues to be the controversy surrounding the lease-leaseback contract with Harris Construction of Gaston Middle School.

The legality of that contract and others like it all around the state relies on whether the State Supreme Court decides to hear FUSD's appeal. Los Angeles Unified, the California School Board's Association and others have filed letters urging the Court to review the case and clarify the law. The appellate court ruling upended previous court decisions and longtime practice among school districts and has created tremendous uncertainty. All the letters, FUSD lease-leaseback project list and associated contracts are available on the FUSD website under the "Lease-leaseback" tab.

The Gaston contract controversy has expanded to include accusations of payback for campaign contributions to various Board members by the CEO of Harris Construction. There is a group that has organized to pursue a recall election of four Board members. In my experience at board meetings and working with the Facilities Division, Board members in FUSD do not participate in the selection of contractors for District building projects. That choice is made from a vetted list (approved by the Board) by the Facilities Division of the District. The Board approves contracts with those contractors. I have never known the Board to vote against the recommendation of the professionals in that division.

Appropriately, the public is sensitive to the appearance of favoritism associated with campaign financing. Currently there are no rules against school board members accepting campaign donations and then voting on issues involving their contributors. A discussion of such rules is probably warranted, but at this point in time there is no evidence to conclude that a recall of Board members is warranted.

## *Behavioral Health*

by Francine Farber



It was standing room only when the Behavioral Health Board (BHB) and the Department of Behavioral Health hosted a public hearing on a draft of the three-year Mental Health Services Act Plan recently. The plan reflects programs and services provided under Proposition 63, which provides mental health funds from a special tax on millionaires.

More than 125 people crowded into the meeting room as presentations were made on the plan, which runs over 250 pages. It is available on the Department's website. The plan describes which of the department's many services will be maintained, which will be enhanced, and which will be deleted. Only a few programs fell into the latter category and of these, some were combined or re-focused rather than actually disappearing. Subsequently the BHB approved the plan with a few tweaks that it and the public had requested, especially with regard to a commitment to work on housing resources for the mentally ill. The plan will now move on to the Board of Supervisors for its approval and finally to the state.

The Board of Supervisors will also be (hopefully) approving the newly edited by-laws of the BHB, which now numbers 10 out of a possible 14 voting members. A new state regulation for the first time permits Department employees who are not involved in its financial matters to be appointed as Board members.

At its August meeting the BHB heard Department Director Dawan Utecht provide an update on the new Adolescent Psychiatric Unit. Its 12 beds have been pretty well filled to capacity since it opened in April. Another 6 beds may be allocated in the future. Contracts with Tulare, Stanislaus and Madera Counties have been signed, as well as with some private insurance companies, so that if beds are available and they have clients needing a placement this can be accomplished. Kaiser Permanente is actually buying a bed, meaning it will be routinely available to its clients. The contractual arrangements outside of Fresno County will help to make the Unit financially viable while giving first preference to Fresno County residents.

# Park Advocacy Update

by Mary Savala



League board members have approved a contract with an advertising agency for an ad urging the City of Fresno to collaborate with Fresno United School District to open school grounds to the public for recreation and open space. The ad will run in Fresno Edwards movie theaters.

We will use a good part of our California Endowment grant for a three month 30 second advertising schedule at every showing at the Edwards Theater in Riverpark. The ad will be soft pressure to urge the City of Fresno to keep its promise to develop a Parks Master Plan using a diverse community committee; working with Fresno Unified to open school grounds for recreation and open space; and to emphasize resources for previously neglected neighborhoods in south and west Fresno.

The ad will acknowledge League's sponsorship and direct

the viewers to websites for Building Healthy Communities for more information and instruction. Watch for the ads at Edwards beginning in mid September.

## Advanced Transit Technology

Measure C contains a Regional Public Transit Program that sets aside funds for new transit technologies. That program has accumulated approximately \$10 million and is predicted to raise \$30 million at the expiration of Measure C extension.

This spring the Fresno County Council of Governments (COG) initiated a community effort to develop guidelines for distributing the funds. That committee has developed weighted criteria for evaluating the project and program proposals. The criteria include the readiness of the proposal to proceed, air quality benefits, energy efficiency and generation, public benefits in-

novation, replication and regional applicability, and environmental justice.

Those recommended criteria and weighed values will be sent to the Measure C Extension Citizens Oversight Committee, the COG technical transportation committee, the COG policy advisory committee, the COG policy board, and finally to the Fresno County Transportation Authority for vetting and approval.

The next task of the committee is to develop a recommendation for diverse representation on a scoring committee and to refine the implementation guidelines for the application process. It is hoped that the program might be up and running by the end of this year. Stephenie Frederick and Mary Savala have represented LWVF on the committee and can answer questions.



## Student Unit

by Lisa Bryant

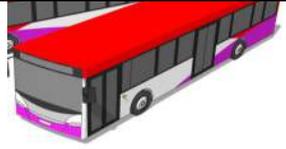
Students returned to Fresno State on August 25 and it is promising to be an exciting year on campus for the Student Unit of LWVF. With a big election in 2016, the Student Unit will be focusing on increasing the number of students who are registered to vote on campus during the 2015-2016 school year. The group already has two registration events scheduled for the first month of school. In the Spring, the Student Unit will be working with other

student groups on campus to create and present a "Primer on the Primaries" to educate students about how primary elections work and why voting in primaries can be as important as the general election.

The Student Unit lost loyal members and officers Kristen Herring and Bailey Baker last May when they graduated (congratulations again!), so the first order of business will be the election of new officers and member recruitment. Stay tuned for the announcement of new leadership.

# Transportation

by Stephenie Frederick



Measure C is the half-cent sales tax paid by Fresno County residents. The proceeds are spent on transportation infrastructure and programs. Measure C was first approved by voters in 1986, and re-approved in 2006. Taxes will be collected under the renewed measure, called "Measure C Extension," through 2027. During that span, the State Board of Equalization expects to collect \$1.714 billion, which it will send to the Fresno County Transportation Authority for disbursement.

LWVF, together with many civic partners, influenced the new measure to loosen its embrace of roadway construction and repair, and increase support for transit, bicycle-pedestrian facilities, and new technology.

The average annual amount allocated to various transportation uses is estimated at \$85.7 million. The allocation percentages are:

- **Regional Public Transit (urban-rural transit, new transit technology)** 24.0%
- **Local Transportation (street-sidewalk repair, bicycle-pedestrian facilities); flexible funding that may also be used as local match for state or federal grants** 34.6%
- **Regional Transportation (freeway interchanges, commute corridors, airports)** 30.4%
- **Alternative Transportation (rail consolidation)** 6.0%
- **Environmental Enhancement (denser urban building, school-bus replacement)** 3.5%
- **Administration-Planning** 1.5%

The agencies eligible for Measure C dollars -- the cities and county of Fresno, the Fresno Council of Government, and Fresno County Rural Transit Agency -- must submit claims, based on project costs, in order to collect their funding.

Measure C consists of enabling legislation, an expenditure plan based on the legislation, and a strategic implementation plan that carries out the expenditure plan.

Both plans are updated every two years to correct tax-collection projections and adjust for amendments and other changes. Income and expenditures are audited annually. A citizens' oversight committee ensures that funds are being used correctly. LWVFs represented on this and Social Services Transportation Advisory Council.

Not all of the taxes collected every year are disbursed to claimants. Two expenditure categories have been growing, unspent, over the years: alternative transportation, and the new transit technology portion of Regional Public Transit. As the amounts have grown, interest has grown in spending the funds.

The alternative-transportation program was primarily intended to move the BNSF rail line into the Union Pacific corridor. Since this appears unlikely to happen, the Measure C Expenditure Plan was amended to free \$25 million to try to persuade the High-Speed-Rail Authority to build its heavy-maintenance facility in the City of Fresno. The alternative transportation program will continue to accrue tax dollars; its accrual may be used to create under- or overpasses to separate vehicle traffic from trains.

Information on the transit technology reserve fund is included in the Parks article on page 5.

The League's contributions in the Measure C arena uphold the goal of the Measure C Extension Expenditure Plan: "To provide a balance between public transit, road improvements, and other transportation programs that improve mobility and air quality within the county and each of the cities."

***Rosellen Kershaw, a past president of the League from 1958-60 and 1988-89, passed away on August 20. She joined us in 1956, was our first 50-year member, and was a community force to be reckoned with. This tribute is her history as printed in our 70th anniversary publication in 2011. In her memory, our 75th anniversary celebration in 2016 will be dedicated to her.***



Rosellen became interested in LWVF because of a study the League was doing concerning urban planning. She went to her first meeting and shortly after that was invited to join the Board.

She remembers Linda Mack and Ruth Albright as being her mentors. League was also the first presidency she held in any organization. Rosellen went on to become state president of American Association of University Women, President and long time Board member of San Joaquin Valley Town Hall, The Fresno Art Museum, The Ani Guild, and The Friends of the Fresno County Library. She credits League training with giving her the confidence and skills to become a community leader.

Planning was one of the most important issues during Rosellen's first term as President. She worked with Gloria Smith and members of the Chamber of Commerce in preparing the City's application for a Model Cities Designation. The League held workshops and conducted studies on planning issues and Rosellen became very active in studying housing issues in the community.

Another issue of the day was civil rights. Rosellen worked with Marian Moseley and Gloria Smith to help bring the civil rights dialogue to the local level. These community leaders often worked up to six hours a day helping to prepare the application which resulted in Fresno being designated a Model City.

Rosellen feels that the ability to analyze issues was the most important thing she learned from League. She used this ability and skill to train other League member in presenting the Pros and Cons on the state ballot issues for many years

Junior League asked Rosellen to develop a Leadership program. This became so successful that she presented it throughout the United States. Public Radio in Fresno was started when three young men came to Rosellen and asked her to help begin a station here. Her fundraising ability is unmatched in the community. She learned that if one person says "no," just go on asking until the money needed is raised.

Her second term as President came about when Mary Savala asked her to step in and help League during a transition time in our leadership. Rosellen continues to participate in many League activities and still serves on the Dinner In The Library committee which she started 21 years ago.

Among Rosellen's many honors are being named Woman of the Year in 1988 by the California Legislature, being named a Paul Harris Fellow by the Fresno Rotary Club, and being an Honorary Life member of AAUW and the League of Women Voters. Rosellen was the first LWVF member to achieve 50-year status.

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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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**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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