

THE FRESNO VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS, FRESNO
1345 BULLDOG LANE, SUITE 4
FRESNO, CA 93710

Phone: (559) 226-VOTE (226-8683). Call for FAX number.
Web site: <http://fresno.ca.lwvnet.org>

MARCH 2008
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MARCH

17 – 22
W 19

LWVUS Marks Sunshine Week 2008. See article below.
“Government Secrecy: Censoring Your Right to Know.” Webcast event at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C
League Board Meeting. League office.
COG votes on Valley Blue Print (see page 6).

W 19 5 p.m.
M 24

APRIL

W 9 5-7 PM
W 16 5 – 8 PM
SA 26 9:30 AM

League Board Meeting. League office. Note date change.
Mayoral Candidates’ Forum. Saroyan Theater.
LWV ANNUAL MEETING: Fresno Bee Columnist Bill McEwen is our featured speaker! Save the date now. Guests are welcome!

MAY

17-18 LWVC Leadership Council: Be the Best You Can Be. Sacramento. See page 6.

JUNE

14-17 LWVUS CONVENTION 2008: Reaching New Heights Together. Portland, Oregon. See page 6.

LWVUS Openness in Government Project Offers Resources for Citizen Action **Would your organization like to sponsor a webcast in the Fresno area?**

On March 19, the LWVUS co-sponsors an event at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. that is available for webcast in your community. This event, “Government Secrecy: Censoring Your Right to Know,” will include a panel discussion on executive branch secrecy, an interactive “How to” guide for citizen-driven reform, and a Q&A period in which you can participate. To learn how to take part in this event you may visit the Openness in Government project page at the LWVUS site and click on the “For Members” box on the right side of the page for more information. Please contact Chris Green at cgreen@openthegovernment.org if you have further questions about organizing a webcast. The deadline is March 7.

Background

The first national “Sunshine Week: Your Right to Know” was launched in March 2005 and will be celebrated in 2008 from March 16-22. Sunshine Week’s intent is to raise awareness of the importance of open government to everyone in the community, not just journalists. The SunShine Week 2008 National Dialogue is brought to you in celebration of Sunshine Week by the League of Women Voters, several major Library Associations, National Coalition Against Censorship, National Freedom of Information Coalition, National Press Club, OpenTheGovernment.org, Sunshine Week, the Project on Government Oversight (POGO), and the Sunlight Foundation.

Full Calendar of Sunshine Week Events

Friday, March 14: National FOI Day Conference (news release, with registration details), hosted by the First Amendment Center.

Monday, March 17: Freedom of Information Day Celebration, by the Collaboration on Government Secrecy, details at <http://www.wcl.american.edu/secler/founders/2008/031708.cfm>

Tuesday, March 18: Remarks by Tom Curley. The National Press Club.
<http://www.sunshineweek.org/sunshineweek/curleyap/>

Wednesday, March 19: OpenTheGovernment.org’s Government Secrecy: Censoring Your Right to Know.

Thursday, March 20: Professor Lawrence Lessig’s lecture on corruption in American democracy, sponsored by the [Sunlight Foundation](http://www.sunlightfoundation.org).

[Observing Your Government in Action Guide](#)

[Looking For Sunshine: Protecting Your Right to Know](#)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Francine Farber, 226-5455

Dear Friends:

*Our Immigration Study has been completed successfully and our local results have been forwarded via the Internet to the **LWVUS** for tabulation along with others from around the country. We have been asked not to share our local consensus results in the Voter because non-members who read it may not understand our process and may conclude that our local consensus is in fact a national consensus.*

However, we are pleased to share with you that our process went along extremely well thanks to a committee chaired by Dolores O'Neal that included Georgia Sisson, Jane Worsley, Murray Farber and myself. We conducted three Immigration Workshops, which were attended by a total of about 50 people. Another 14 members attended our Consensus Meeting on January 26 and spent several hours in a heated discussion to establish priorities for the consensus questions. Although there were a number of items that caused lengthy dialogue among us, we were able to come to consensus on 33 of the 35 items, with only two items listed as "no consensus."

*During February the **LWVUS** Immigration Study Committee is tabulating the results from local Leagues nationwide to determine the possibility of establishing a national position on immigration. They will present the results to the LWVUS Board. It will then be presented at the Convention in June.*

Those of you who attended any of the workshops told us you found the presenters informative and the information stimulating. Kudos to Dolores and the committee for their worthwhile effort.

Francine

1. Agreed to monitor and count votes for the SEIU election as well as the CSUF Student Elections at Fresno State in April. In that regard, **Liz Shields** will develop for Board approval a list of protocol for such elections, modeled on what she and **Mary Savala** learned at the state League Convention about conducting elections.
2. **Liz Shields** has arranged through MaiKa Yang of Stone Soup to meet with a group of young Hmong professionals in a seminar/class on the different levels of government and their roles, the legislative process, how to be an informed voter, and civic participation. The first meeting is set for Friday, February 29th from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at Stone Soup.

PROGRAM PLANNING REPORT

Francine Farber, 226-5455

The LWVUS's Program Planning Meeting was held on February 23 to discuss and select local priorities for program in 2008-09. **Local priorities include:**

Social Policy: an integrated approach to resolving critical issues in education, health, housing and mental health. League leaders will be identified in each of these four areas to work with committee members to set objectives and relevant activities for the year. Wherever practical the leaders will collaborate on goals of mutual interest.

Natural Resources: an integrated approach to resolving critical issues in land use including air, water and energy. Continued emphases will be healthy dairies, the Regional Blueprint process and oversight of Measure C expenditures.

Voter Services: emphases on the upcoming elections and our role in education and advocacy for issues, as well as planning for our second Constitution Day celebration in September, 2008.

On a national level we have asked for a review of the structure of Social Policy positions since a number of them appear to be archaic.

LWVUS delegates to the national convention in June will carry with them our concerns about our national League positions on the environment, election reform, health care and education policies.

Mutual Benefits from Paid Sponsorships for The Fresno Voter

With this issue we are soliciting paid sponsorships for *The Fresno Voter's* April 2008 through March 2009 publications. The sponsorships are mutually beneficial. Since our sponsors receive the monthly newsletters, League activities will be brought to the attention of these community leaders who, at the same time, are helping to pay for our local League's publication and making our readers aware of their services.

We are grateful to our current sponsors for their support. Any League member wishing to become a sponsor, or to secure another sponsor for us, may contact Francine Farber at 226-5455. Sponsorships cost \$100 annually.

<<<<<<>>>>>> **MENTAL HEALTH** <<<<<<>>>>>>
Helen Siporin, 999-9163

The following is Part 1 of a report covering topics discussed at the LWVF Lunch & Learn held on February 6, 2008. The presenters were Helen Siporin, Vice-President, NAMI Fresno (999-6163), Curt Thornton, Secretary, Mental Health Advisory Board (288-1856) and Dave Weikel, Executive Director, Mental Health America – Central Valley (253-2204).

**Mental Health Services Act (MHSA):
New Hope for Mental Health?
Part I. Children’ Services**

Background

Proposition 63, now referred to as the MHSA, provides California counties with new funding for a broad continuum of services/supports including: intensive community-based services (currently being rolled out), expansion of existing services, prevention and early intervention services, outreach and engagement services, and innovative programs for increasing access to services.

In addition, the MHSA will fund infrastructure development, including permanent supportive housing, buildings for direct services and administration, technological needs, and workforce education, training and recruitment. MHSA emphasizes increasing access and services to populations that have historically been unserved, underserved, or inappropriately served by mental health services.

Unfortunately, while dedicated solely to mental health and intended to expand and reform mental health service delivery, the MHSA cannot keep up with the exponentially increasing need for services and the steady decline in traditional funding streams. Thus, many counties have had a net loss, resulting in staff layoffs despite MHSA funds. Likewise, Fresno County faces possible reductions in the next budget cycle.

Children’s Mental Health

Numbers in Perspective

The Surgeon General’s Report of 1999 estimated that 20 percent of all children have mental health disorders with at least mild functional impairment. Of these, 5 to 9 percent are affected by more serious emotional disturbance. Extrapolated countywide, these percentages mean that 9,000 to 16,000 - of our approximately 180,000 K-12 population - require timely and appropriate intervention to prevent their serious mental health issues from resulting in costly, adverse outcomes,

i.e., school failure, foster/group home placement, hospitalization, incarceration, self injury/suicide, or harm to others.

A Look at the Population

Childhood mental illnesses are believed to have biological, psychological and environmental determinants. As such, severe mental illness can erupt in children from both dysfunctional and healthy, intact families. Without intervention, severe mental illness can render an otherwise stable family dysfunctional.

The most frequently occurring illnesses among children and youth are oppositional defiance (20%) and anxiety (13%) disorders. Major depression and post-traumatic stress follow, with the least frequent (however most debilitating) illnesses being bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. Mental illnesses may express themselves in *externalizing* (acting out, aggressive) or *internalizing* (withdrawal, self harming) behaviors. Untreated, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia are linked with the highest suicide rate (10 -15%).

Certain children are at elevated risk for mental illness, i.e., those with a parent (or first degree relative) having a mental illness or substance abuse, those having experienced trauma, those with learning or physical impairments, chronically ill children, teen parents, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or **questioning** teens.

Capacity (Traditional Funding)

In a typical year, our mental health department sees 6,000 to 7,000 children and youth for treatment. Lacking an inpatient unit, we send approximately 80 children out of county for hospitalization, at an average stay of 9 days, frequently separated from family. Comparing prevalence estimates with our current capacity leaves between 2,000 and 9,000 affected children and youth *without access to treatment*.

Capacity (MHSA Funded)

Services funded by the 2005 planning effort are now rolling out and are contracted to serve approximately 560 new children and transition-aged youths Direct services to children 0-5 and 11-17 target youngsters with disruptive disorders who are at risk for juvenile justice involvement or out-of-home placement. Services to clients aged 16

<<<<<<>>>>>> (See **Mental Health** on page 4.)

LEGISLATIVE REPORT
Terri Figgs, 431-7274

**The League Needs
You To Make
Redistricting Reform
Happen!**

The League of Women Voters of California (LWVC) has given high priority to getting a fair and open redistricting process in California. The LWVC has pledged to help qualify the California Voters First Initiative for the November 2008 ballot. Over the next few months, a million signatures are needed on petitions to put this redistricting reform plan to a vote. So, the League is calling all League members to rally to the cause and help us get those signatures.

How? First, every member will receive a petition with three signature spaces.

Sign it yourself, get two more signatures from your family, friends or colleague, and send it in. It's easy! Volunteer to take more petitions and get signatures at meetings, rallies, parties, supermarkets, movie lines, wherever you go. Please contact the LWVC Advocacy Assistant myoung@lwvc.org to volunteer. We'll be working with your League, Inter-League Organization, or County Council to make it happen.

Allowing legislators to draw their own districts is a serious conflict of interest that harms voters. This reform will put the voters back in charge. Read the text of the initiative, see the talking points, and get the very latest news about the campaign on our web site, <http://ca.lwv.org/lwvc/action/redistrict/>.

Redistricting Game: A Learning Tool

Visit the web site below to learn more about the redistricting process and try your hand at drawing districts for a simulated state: <http://www.redistrictinggame.com/index.php?pg=game>.

EVERY CAR COUNTS!

Support the League—Donate Your Vehicle

Donate your car, truck, * Tax Deduction
RV, boat or motorcycle * Free Pick-up
-- Running or Not! * We Do Paperwork!

CALL 1-800-320-0476 www.lwvc.org

League of Women Voters of California Education Fund

LWVCEF: Encouraging informed participation in government and influencing public policy since 1920.

Kay Bertken, 226-2720

The biggest item in local and state education discussions this month has been the uncertain shortfall in the state budget and its ripple effect in local school districts. To meet early projections of budget cuts, Clovis Unified is entertaining a golden handshake incentive program to senior staff who might retire early and be replaced by lower paid personnel with less seniority. Fresno Unified (FUSD) has proposed a budget that draws down its reserves. Additional cuts at the state level will require more local reconsiderations.

Fresno Unified has hired a team to develop a facilities master plan to guide priority facilities investments for the next 10 years. Prior to visiting and evaluating each of the district sites, that team is developing priority criteria in discussions with concerned groups. Multiple public meetings are being held through March 6, to gather the community perspective. The first of those meetings took place at 6:30 p.m. on February 19, 20 and 21 respectively, at Sunnyside, Edison and Bullard high schools. The next community meetings are scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on March 4 at Fresno High, March 5 at Hoover High and March 6 at Wishon Elementary. The FUSD facilities master plan team also welcomes comments on the District's need for facilities at their website: <http://www/fresno.unified.org/dept/planning/masterplan/>.

District leaders have agreed that priorities for the facilities planning will include the creation of a middle school in Southwest Fresno. Students in that part Fresno have been bused to middle schools in other parts of the District for years, negatively impacting their participation in extra-curricular activities and their affiliations with fellow students. In addition, planning will have to accommodate the District's uneven growth, overcrowding in south-east Fresno, declining enrollments in the north; some sites that are underutilized and others that are so impacted that students have to be bused from their neighborhood elementary schools.

A very positive development of these planning efforts is that Fresno Unified and the City of Fresno are currently drafting a new and more comprehensive agreement to govern the shared use of existing facilities and potential cooperative development of new joint-use projects.

Opportunities for Growth and Networking at the State and National League Levels!

We are encouraging as many members of the Fresno League as possible to take advantage of the workshops and networking opportunities offered at two venues on the west coast in May and June 2008. Update your skills and learn new techniques for our fast-changing society.

1. LWVC Leadership Council in Sacramento, May 17-18 (preliminary activities May 16.)

Our Bridge to the Future

Leadership Council is the place for established and emerging League leaders to enhance their skills and learn the most current information regarding League issues and discuss the vision for our future.

The world in which League operates is constantly changing and it is important that we adapt. Intelligence has been defined as the ability of an organism to adapt to its environment. League members are known for their exceptional intelligence which is the reason League has been a strong and respected organization for almost 90 years.

At Council, you will be provided with information and workshops to prepare you for success as a League leader in the 21st Century and beyond. As a result of your commitment to League by continuing to adapt, future generations will celebrate League's 200th year anniversary with pride and gratitude for those who came before them. Attend for one day at reduced rates. **Details at <http://www.ca.lwv.org>.**

Check out the workshops at: <http://ca.lwv.org/lwvc/aboutlwvc/council/2008/workshops.html>

Non-league members are welcome and get a great introduction to the League. Let's carpool!

2. LWVUS CONVENTION 2008 in Portland, Oregon, June 13-17

Why Should You Attend the LWVUS Convention in June?

Have you ever experienced the excitement of being with a thousand people who care about our democracy? Have you had the opportunity to network with others who have achieved great things at local, state and national levels? Would you like a chance to learn from national speakers, professional trainers, League members and staff with special expertise? Then don't miss the LWVUS National Convention on June 13-17 in Portland, OR! Join with Leaguers from all over the country to discuss, debate, have fun and meet the amazing people who, like you, care about the League of Women Voters. Visit the LWVUS Members Web site for the Convention Preview and information about registration.

Due dates for LWVUS Convention 2008:

Hardship designation requests - March 1
Caucus room reservations (by availability, first-come, first-served) - April 13
Hotel reservations (by availability, first-come, first-served) - May 22
Convention registrations without incurring a late fee - May 23
Cancellations/refund requests - June 11

Visit the LWVUS Members Web site for more information and e-mail lwv@lwv.org with questions.

The LWVUS Board encourages all interested League members to attend. We have limited funds to help send two voting delegates to Convention 2008. Others are welcome to attend as observers.

Please call Jane Worsley, 431-0360 for more information about these two opportunities at the state and national League levels!

President
 Francine Farber, 226-5455

Treasurer
 Jane Worsley, 431-0360

Membership
 Sue Sheragy, 243-9305

Voters Service
 Liz Shields, 298-5183

VOTER Editors
 Patsy Anderson, 439-2377
 Liz Shields, 298-5183

JOIN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS!
Men and Women of Voting Age Making Democracy Work

MISSION: The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through voter education and advocacy on issues.

NONPARTISANSHIP: 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.

TO PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS: For more information, please leave your name and phone number on the League message phone, 226-8683, or contact our Membership Chair, Sue Sheragy, at 243-9305. Prospective members receive one issue of *The Fresno Voter* at no cost.

JOIN US! Members receive newsletters national, state and local Leagues, may access local, state and national League websites and list-serves, and may participate in League studies of issues. Yearly Dues: ~ Individual - \$60 ~ Family - \$90 (2 members, same address) ~ Student - \$30

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

Name: _____ Ph. _____ E-mail _____

Address: _____

- - - - - Reminder, cut and turn the section below so fold is on bottom - - - - -

== March 2008 == The Fresno Voter, March 2008 == The Fresno Voter, March 2008 == The Fresno Voter, March 2008 ==

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