



The Fresno VOTER

Phone: 559-226-VOTE

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

CITY HALL AND COURT VISITS MARK CONSTITUTION DAY

By Francine Farber 556-5455

The young woman from Mexico turned around and knelt on the chair, her back toward the deputy sheriff. He placed a heavy chain around her waist and attached it to handcuffs, and then shackled her legs. She stood up, turned forward and hobbled a few steps.

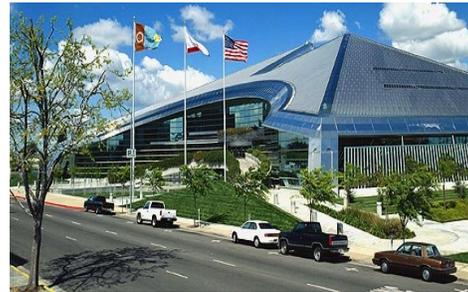
Then she giggled.

Fortunately, this was only a demonstration and not the real thing. The young woman was part of a group from the Fresno Adult School who was in a class for students learning English as their second language.. Together with a group of elder Hmong shepherded by Stone Soup officials, the ESL students spent the morning at City Hall and Superior Court as they learned about our system of government and justice.

The event was arranged by Liz Shields, Vice President for Voter Services, and took place to honor Constitution Day on September 17. It began with a visit by the Stone Soup group to the office of City Council president Blong Xiong. As they sat in the Council conference room, Xiong spoke in their native language. Their pride in him was evident as the first Hmong govern-

ment official. They laughed and joked in a way that outsiders do not usually observe since the Hmong residents of Fresno are most often the ones that are the outsiders. He later told those of us who could not speak Hmong that he

had tried to impress the elders with the fact that this was their government and they should not be afraid to speak to any of the officials.



-FRESNO CITY HALL-

He urged them to attend a mayoral forum that would be held the following week by Asian leaders featuring Henry T. Perea and Ashley Swearingen.

Many of the Hmong group were camera aficionados and snapped numerous photos inside and outside the building in various arrangements. A leisurely stroll from City Hall to Superior Court was next on the agenda. This gave the Stone Soup officials the opportunity to talk about other buildings that we passed along the way, such as Fresno Police Headquarters, the Fresno Library and other official state offices.

At Superior Court we were-joined by the ELS group. After

See **Constitution Day**, page 6

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Calendar

Sunday, Oct. 5 Woodward Park Library, LWV Pros and Cons on Propositions for Hadasah. 2 p.m. Public Invited.

Wednesday, Oct 15 Regular Board Meeting 4:30 —note change in time for this meeting only

Monday, Oct. 20 Last day to register to vote in November

Tuesday, Oct. 28 Last day county offices will accept voter's application for a vote-by-mail ballot

Tuesday, Nov. 4 Election Day

Wednesday, Nov. 7 Film on Jessie Morrow Mountain at Cin-culture, CSUF

Wednesday, Nov. 19 Regular board meeting 5 p.m.

December, Holiday Party to be announced

President's Message

Mayoral Forum a Huge Success



I was anxious about our League's participation in the Mayoral Forum on Poverty because of several changes in venue and date. In addition, although a core of the faithful showed up at planning meetings, a number of co-sponsoring groups seemed to honor their participation in complete absentia while others showed up only now and then.

Dolores O'Neal and I participated in many planning sessions over the past months. I'm happy to tell you that the Forum turned out to be a huge success, although I was disappointed that LWVF members represented only a very small handful of the more than 300 people who turned out to hear Henry T. Perea and Ashley Swearingen discuss substantive issues on September 11. The Forum was held in the new Exhibit Hall of the Convention Center.

Not only were both candidates well-informed and articulate, but our moderator was outstanding. He was Dr. Manuel Pastor, professor of Latin American and Latino Studies at UC Santa Cruz and an experienced speaker and author on economics, race, community empowerment and demographic change. His questions had been partially framed by the planning committee, including input from our league, but he presented them with intelligence, discretion and humor.

Although the overarching topic of the Forum was poverty in Fresno, under that heading there was discussion of homelessness, housing, jobs, crime, education and health. Participants lined up to ask questions and they were incorporated into various segments of the discussion. Questions were well-stated and answered by both candidates. Timekeeping was handled expertly by LWVF member Murray Farber.

It was gratifying to get broad media attention from the Fresno Bee, local television stations and radio outlets. A number of mayoral forums are planned between now and election day but I suspect this one had the largest turnout.

Francine

JAIL TOUR STILL AVAILABLE

A group of LWVF members took advantage of Sheriff Margaret Mim's offer to provide a guided tour of Fresno County's jails when they visited the downtown facilities on September 23. Another tour is still available.

Date: Wednesday, October 22

Time: 10 a.m. to noon either day (participants may leave early if necessary)

Place: 1225 M Street, NW corner of M and Fresno Streets. Metered parking available, or underground in courthouse lot.

Slow walking, no stairs. Elevators available. Members will be escorted in groups of 10.

Participants will tour the men's and women's jails with an experienced deputy sheriff guide to answer your questions.

CHANGE IN MINORITY LANGUAGE BALLOTS

By Victor Salazar, Fresno County Clerk

The Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended, requires certain jurisdictions throughout the United States to provide election materials in various minority languages. The Department of Commerce (Census Bureau) and the U.S. Department of Justice work cooperatively to notify election offices which languages are required and also monitor these requirements.

Fresno County is one of 296 jurisdictions that must provide minority language materials. Of twenty-five counties in California, Fresno County is required to print all election materials in both the English and Spanish languages. By comparison, Los Angeles County must provide seven languages and four are required in San Diego and San Francisco.

Fresno County has previously printed bilingual materials, including ballots, in both English and Spanish. However, it is anticipated that a third

language will be mandated after the 2010 census.

The ballot for the Fresno County November 4, 2008 Presidential General Election will contain races including the President and Vice-President, four congressional seats, three assembly seats, 56 local offices, ten local measures and 12 statewide propositions. To say we have a full ballot is an understatement. All of these races must be printed on one ballot. There simply isn't enough room for all these races if they're to be in two languages. Consequently, Fresno County will meet the federal mandates by providing either an English or Spanish language ballot. For visually impaired voters, our touch screen voting machines will contain verbal instructions in the two languages.

Given that we anticipate a third language requirement, Fresno County had planned on printing ballots in the future in English and providing a separate

minority language ballot upon request. However, due to the overcrowded ballot, it is now necessary to implement this change.

Our office will initiate a campaign to advise the Spanish language community of the changes in the availability of minority language voting materials. Additionally, there will be a much more readable ballot in both languages due to the increased size of the print. In the past, we received numerous complaints about the font size. This should no longer be a problem.

Vote by Mail/Absentee voters who have not previously requested a ballot in Spanish may do so now by calling 488-3246, or going to the County Elections Office at 2221 Kern Street in Fresno. If you should receive a ballot printed in English and you require one in Spanish, either call or visit the Elections Office. Ballots printed in Spanish will also be available at your polling place.

PROPOSITION 11



California's current system that allows legislators to draw their own district boundaries has resulted in a state Legislature that is paralyzed by partisan politics. This gridlock was at least partially responsible for holding up the state budget for a record setting number of days this year. It has kept state legislators from dealing with issues that have to be solved. California's many serious problems demand action from the legislators whose inaction is protected by their 'safe' electoral districts.

The current system allows 99% of incumbents to be reelected, making legislators virtually unaccountable to the people who elect them. Proposition 11, *California Voters FIRST* Act, will give voters a real voice in state

government. The initiative has been endorsed by a variety of organizations including AARP, Common Cause, the California Democratic Council and the California Republican Assembly. Its passage has been a major focus of LWVC during the run up to this election.

Proposition 11 calls for a commission of 14 independent citizens to redraw the legislative districts. The commission will be comprised of five Democrats, five Republicans and four citizens not affiliated with either major party. Commissioners would be chosen for their impartiality, skills, and to reflect our State's demographic and geographic diversity. Proposition 11 will create a list of prioritized mapping criteria for the Commission to follow, ensuring that federal and state laws are followed. It will also ensure that the redistricting process is open and transparent and that the public will have ample opportunity to give its input during the process.

It is essential that Proposition 11 be in place before 2011, when California is slated for redistricting.

MENTAL HEALTH

By Julianne Lowery 476-0010

Fresno County has received State approval of its \$3.3 million proposal to create a comprehensive information technology system. Using funding provided by the Mental Health Services Act, the county will be able to upgrade its information systems to more efficiently comply with state and federal regulations, and provide more complete and accessible information for clients, their families and providers. Among the features of the new system will be electronic health records, computer labs offering access to healthcare information for clients, and Web-based telemedicine targeted towards underserved populations and rural areas.

For those receiving mental health care, these changes can result in meaningful improvements in quality of care. Electronic records can make up-to-date information available to everyone to whom the client agrees to give access. For example, in a crisis, health care pro-

viders can get accurate, timely information to help them understand and address the client's needs. For those whose family or community members are involved in their treatment, electronic files of treatment plans detail what measures can be taken to resolve problems or contact resources. The county also plans to have computers available for clients so that they and their families can access information on mental health topics and other resources.

The Internet will provide residents, primarily of rural Fresno County, with access to mental healthcare providers under this proposal. For most people, the idea of video-conference medical examinations and treatment may seem strange and uncomfortable. However, according to the California Healthcare Foundation, the use of Internet-based technologies has made "tele-psychiatry" the fastest growing sector in psychiatry, with applications in such diverse settings as rural

clinics, emergency rooms and prisons. With nationwide shortages of mental health workers, this technology is expected to become increasingly common. A similar program began in Kern County in 2007, linking rural residents to mental health workers through teleconferencing.

While implementation of the new information technology system is underway, the Department of Behavioral Health continues addressing shortfalls of \$1.5 million in adult mental health and \$440,000 in children and family services, a process which Jiang Nguyen, Director of Behavioral Health Services, characterized as "painful". Speaking to the Mental Health Advisory Board, she said "We're down to the bone" due to past cuts. The current effort is to examine all areas in order to reduce costs, maximize usage and revenue, and integrate MHSA and realignment funded services.

LAND BUFFER TASK FORCE

By Joan Lipton 229-8486

The Land Buffer Task Force is always scheduled right after the Farm Land Preservation meetings at the Council of Governments (COG). Many serve on both committees since they are closely linked. At the last meeting on September 5, some suggested buffers were truck farms, specialty crops, small farming and even office/commercial as approved land uses.

The point was stressed by Kingsburg's Don Pauley that office holders in cities would have to adhere to the buffers and not make exceptions. Present elected city officials are believed to have a commitment to buffers. Buffers would not be "no growth" but orderly expansion accommodating development as well as defending farm land.

Throughout the meetings, many ideas have come forward. It was suggested that COG put them together in proposals so we could discuss them and decide finally what is desirable for the County of Fresno.

League of Women Voters Fresno

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EDUCATION

By Kay Bertken 226-2720

The up-coming school board election in FUSD is the Education Committee's first priority at this time. We are pursuing media contacts to encourage coverage of the trustee races in the November election. We want to be sure that the candidates in the three races have their positions as widely known as possible. The League is already participating in a Comcast presentation of the candidates answering questions that we will provide. We are encouraging other outlets to cover these races with candidate profiles and positions.

We also decided to devote our attention to the high drop out rates in our schools. Last year we sponsored a Lunch 'n Learn to educate ourselves about the nature and extent of the problem. This year, we would like to participate with the City and the schools in focusing on solutions. There is a great deal of activity surrounding the issue across the state, and we will need to define a role for ourselves. Governor Schwarzenegger has called for a statewide summit on the problem, convening teenagers around the state to discuss and propose solutions to the problem. In addition, the City of Fresno (along with other California cities) is convening a leadership team to develop a comprehensive, actionable plan for keeping students in school through graduation. Our local education committee would like to participate in this effort, perhaps by convening a community event where the participating agencies can meet and discuss their efforts. There may be some potential for funding such an event through America's Promise, a national non-profit agency involved with child and adolescent issues.

This month the FUSD school board received a report of its student achievement testing for spring 2008. Two sets of scores represent two different accountability systems—the Academic Performance Index (API) for the State of California evaluates achievement against growth targets from one year to the next; the NCLB federal system measures the percent of students each year who score proficient or advanced. Both models rely on the California Standards Tests in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math, and they both report out achievement against standards for ten subgroups—seven based on ethnicity plus additional subgroups of students with disabilities, socioeconomically disadvantaged students and English learners.

District wide, there was a 14 point growth in 2007-2008 on the API (following improvements of 8 points and 15 points in 2006-2007 and 2005-2006 respectively), with 51 out of 87 **schools meeting all API growth targets.** Ten more schools met all targets except for one subgroup. **The District did not**

meet its federal AYP target, meeting 38 of the 46 criteria. The district met 5 of 11 ELA targets and 9 of 11 math targets. The English Learner subgroup is the

.....while CST scores have been climbing steadily over the last four years, more than three out of four students are not proficient or advanced in ELA or Math. Only about 20% of students are proficient or better in both.

most challenging for the District. This will be the District's third year as a Program Improvement

District under NCLB, but it is not alone. As a result of continually advancing targets, 97% of California districts are Program Improvement Districts this year. This year the target advanced by 11%; it will be even higher next year.

While CST scores have been climbing steadily over the last four years, more than three out of four students are not proficient or advanced in ELA or Math. Only about 20% of students are proficient or better in both. Scores climbed last year for all subgroups except students with disabilities, and the achievement gap narrowed slightly. The Superintendent suggested that he will be bringing forward proposals promoting greater equity and access to combat the disparity in performance among the District's subgroups.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Sue Sheragy 243-9305

Welcome new member:

Carole McCrery

30240 North Dome Dr.

Coarsegold, CA 93614

Please correct your new yellow roster :

**Amy Nuttall-Zwaan's address
should be:**

3163 West Spruce

Fresno, CA 93711

CONSTITUTION DAY, continued from page 1

passing through the Security area, we traveled to the seventh floor where a deputy sheriff spent the better part of an hour explaining the way prisoners are handled (thus the demonstration with the young woman) and showing us the yellow uniforms for prisoners “who don’t play well with others,” the red uniforms for other men, and the green uniforms for women. Upon request he emptied his 22 pound belt, showing us his collapsible baton, gun with a flashlight, lots of extra bullets, handcuffs, radio and extra flashlight, taser unit and pepper spray, which he kept for unduly aggressive dogs. He also showed his bullet-resistant vest. He described how he once held 15 marijuana-growing criminals at bay with his gun while waiting in the mountains for 45 minutes for backup to arrive. The difference between a deputy and a police officer, he averred, was that the police officer had a partner at hand while the deputy had to wait for help to arrive.

The woman from Mexico insisted on a photo with her former “captor”.

The group then traveled down to the second floor to the courtroom of Judge Robert Oliver. He was a kindly but imposing presence with his black robes. He softened his image by standing close to his interested listeners as he

spoke about his passion for our system of justice and compared it with some other places in the world which mete out swifter and less measured sentences. He spoke extensively about the importance of



—Fresno County Superior Court—

of serving on a jury, even if it appears to be a hardship. When asked by a visitor why people are called for jury duty and then it is cancelled so frequently, he explained that about 95 percent of all cases are settled before coming to trial. Some of the settlements occur at the last minute, and other cancellations are caused by delays due to illness of witnesses or procedural delays by attorneys.

As we left, the young Mexican woman, under his spell, asked Judge Oliver if she could shake his hand. He enthusiastically complied, and then she surprised everyone by asking if she could hug him. He smilingly allowed this most unjudicial action.

VOTER SERVICES REPORT

By Elizabeth Shields 298-5183

Constitution Day

Two groups from Stone Soup and Fresno Adult School ESL classes participated in Constitution Day events on September 17. See front page story.

November Election

We will be calling all volunteers for assistance with the absentee ballot processing and staffing the phone bank. Absentee ballots will be processed starting around October 28 and continuing past Election Day, November 4.

We need questions for the candidate forums for all contested races in Fresno County : Congressional, State Assembly, Mayoral, Fresno Unified Board and Central Unified Board. We will be taping candidate forums at Comcast studios on October 14 and 15. Bill Murphy will be the moderator. Invitations have been sent out to candidates in all the contested races and about half have responded positively. David Schechter for Ashley Swearengen has responded that she will not be able to participate.

We have already received seven calls for proposition presentations in October with several more anticipated.

Easy Voter Guides should arrive soon and will be available for distribution.

On August 21, I provided training for voter registration to volunteers at Veterans Hospital, and may do the same for Hispanic volunteers who will be conducting voter registration drives in their respective communities.

On October 4 , we will conduct voter registration in Madera at a Family Fund Day hosted by Madera Special Needs organization.

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CALIFORNIA RECOMMENDS:

CALIFORNIA PROPOSITIONS: TEAR OUT AND TAKE WITH YOU TO THE POLLS

YES PROP 1A — HIGH-SPEED PASSENGER TRAIN BOND ACT -- \$9.95 BILLION

NEUTRAL PROP 2— STANDARDS FOR CONFINING FARM ANIMALS

YES PROP 3 — CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL BOND ACT -- \$980 MILLION

NO PROP 4 — WAITING PERIOD AND PARENTAL NOTIFICATION BEFORE TERMINATION OF MINOR’S PREGNANCY

YES PROP 5 —NONVIOLENT DRUG OFFENSES, SENTENCING, PAROLE AND REHABILITATION

NO PROP 6 — POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT FUNDING, CRIMINAL PENALTIES AND LAWS

NO PROP 7 — RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION

NO PROP 8 — ELIMINATES RIGHT OF SAME-SEX COUPLES TO MARRY

NO PROP 9 — CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM. VICTIMS’ RIGHTS PAROLE

NO PROP 10 — ALTERNATIVE FUEL VEHICLES AND RENEWABLE ENERGY BONDS —\$5 BILLION

YES PROP 11 — REDISTRICTING REFORM: CALIFORNIA VOTERS FIRST ACT

NEUTRAL PROP 12— VETERAN’S BOND ACT OF 2008

CALIFORNIA GENERAL ELECTION : NOVEMBER 4, 2008

POLLS ARE OPEN FROM 7:00 A.M. TO 8:00 P.M.

REMBEMBER TO VOTE

JAIL TIME FOR THE LEAGUE

By Murray Farber 226-5455

You might think you know all about jails because you watch "Law and Order." But nine members of the League and NAMI on a tour of the county jail learned that it's different when the inmates are studying you as you walk through on a tour.

You might even wonder who are those two pretty 20-ish women staring at you through the shatter-proof glass in their pre-booking cell. But you soon learn that women have to be treated by the same rules as the men. After all, you never know what weapon a woman might pull out of her hair. And there was the heavyweight woman who tried to hide a pistol in the folds of her belly.

These are just some of the facts that the tour group learned from an extremely informative Lieutenant Ron Vega during a tour arranged as a result of an invitation Sheriff Margaret Mims extended when she addressed the League's Ice Cream Social in August.

As you see two men behind bars playing checkers, it all seems calm. Then you are reminded that you are passing through the behavioral health section, formerly called the mental health area. According to Lt. Vega, the county jail is "the largest case provider for the mentally ill in the Valley. Family members and society have given up on them. They commit crimes but cannot be held totally accountable. They're not aware and are just waiting to be adjudicated by the court."

Although cameras and computers monitor every facet of the jail, only two cells in the behavioral section actually contain cameras to be sure those inmates don't harm themselves. The lieutenant said the jail cannot force inmates to take their medications. In the late Eighties, the jail ended the practice of giving inmates Thorazine and having them shuffle along in a haze.

Throughout the jail, the male inmates wear red jumpsuits; the females green; and inmate workers, blue. High power prisoners, such as murder suspects, wear yellow. The inmates are assigned to colors and cells depending on the level of the charges against them; whether they are first-time offenders; are "unsophisticated" inmates who could be victimized; serving a year or less since a longer term requires sending them to prison; are awaiting a court date which could be as long as six years in a major case; are gang members who have to be separated from rivals; or are disabled and might be abused.

It was worth noting how peer pressure or boredom led inmates to clean their own areas. Some watched television -- no cable programs, although an educational channel is offered. The tour group also passed women working in the laundry and at a sewing machine in exchange for extended visiting privi-

leges or to learn skills. Women comprise 10 percent of the more than 3,000 persons in the jail.

Among the tour highlights was seeing the intake area including medical screening and metal detection; the strip search area for drugs and weapons; the "sobering units," formerly known as "detox units"; the data base section which conducts a search for outstanding warrants and checks fingerprints to verify IDs; restraining chairs for inmates who are dangerous to themselves or others and are monitored by an RN.

During the tour, the League visitors were permitted to step into a padded cell, a computerized security station where a single deputy could look down and control 278 inmates, and an elevator without a control panel. Instead, as you looked into a camera, you asked the central control for your floor. As a result, an inmate who gained access to an elevator would be stuck.

It's easy to feel sorry when you see 20 inmates in red suits sitting or standing in a cell, looking expressionless, waiting for their turn to go to court. At the same time, you are aware of the intense security within every phase of the facility and the need for the deputies to be armed. But their weapons are all non-lethal, firing pepper balls or lead shot in a Kevlar sock.

As for the current controversy over the release of inmates, Lt. Vega maintained that Sheriff Mims is balancing her budget needs with her concern for public safety.

FACTS FROM THE JAIL TOUR INFORMATION SHEET

FACILITIES:

South Annex holds **686**; built in 1947

Main Jail holds **1064**; opened in June, 1989

North Annex holds **1728**; opened in January, 1993 with 432 beds; expansion of floors 3-5 opened December, 2002; additional 1 1296 beds

Satellite holds 300; opened in 1986

Total Capacity: 3778

INMATE POPULATION:

The Average Daily Population fluctuates, but is roughly 3250 inmates (the yearly average was 3247 in 2006), broken down accordingly:

88% Males

12% Females

Average age is 33

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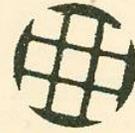
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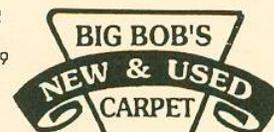
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