



THE VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF STANISLAUS COUNTY

February 2014

Serving the Citizens of Stanislaus County, California

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President's Message

February is the birthday of the League of Women Voters. When Carrie Chapman Catt founded the League the political climate was not all that different from what it is now. Moneyed special interests wielded great influence and politicians responded to those interests. At the National Convention in 1921, Mrs. Catt referred to the League of Women Voters as an experiment. She went on to say, "I am satisfied that every woman here believes that there is work and a big tremendous work for the League of Women Voters to do... So I look to the League of Women Voters to lead us out of this stage of discontent, which is common to our country and all others in the world."

Our current National President, Elizabeth McNamara, states that in our current "stage of discontent", the League has a unique opportunity to lead our communities to better understanding and better communication. As a national organization we can not only deliver a consistent message, we can draw strength from each other even as we adapt to meet the needs of our individual communities.

Our local League is making our voice heard as the Modesto City Council considers an amendment to the General plan. Based on LWV Stanislaus County's long-standing position on the preservation of prime farm land, the Board voted to oppose the portion of the amendment which would annex the Wood Colony area to the City of Modesto and zone it for industrial development. See the article further in the Voter discussing our position in more detail as well as the letter we have sent to each member of the Modesto City Council as well as the Modesto Bee.

Each year we review and if necessary update our local positions as well as provide input for state and national positions. It is on the basis of these positions that we are able to take positions on issues such as the amendment to the General Plan. We will be doing this program planning on February 12 at 6 PM prior to the Board meeting. Please join us for this meeting to make sure your voice is heard in the work of the League.

Mary Giventer, Elected President

Save the Date: "Non-profits Talking Taxes Workshop"

March 18, 2014, CSU Stanislaus

We have been awarded a grant from LWV California to bring this exciting workshop to our area. The presenter will be Kim Klein, a nationally recognized consultant to non-profit organizations on fund raising and dealing with government entities at all levels. In this free workshop she will offer her expertise not only to League members but to local activists in any local non-profit. More details will be in the next Voter.

Mary Giventer, Elected President

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORIES

New and updated for 2014! Members can receive a directory by calling Lynn Kelso at 524-1698

and it will be mailed to you.

VOTER SERVICE

The LWV Stanislaus and the LWV Merced are in the beginning stages of setting up a legislative interview with our State Senator, 12th District State Senator Anthony Canella. The meeting will be held at the end of February. Volunteers to assist or attend this interview can contact Ellen Meyer.

**LWV of STANISLAUS
COUNTY OFFICERS**

President

Mary Giventer

president@lwvstanislaus.org

Vice President

Seena Rhine

Vp2@lwvstanislaus.org

Secretary

Marie Bairey

secretary@lwvstanislaus.org

Treasurer

Larry Giventer

treasurer@lwvstanislaus.org

DIRECTORS

Action – State and National

Hanna Renning

Action - Local

Stella Beratlis

Finance Drive

Ellen Dunbar

Lunch and Learn

Ruby Hennessey

Membership

Laurie Carley

Nominating Committee

Amy Wolfe, chair

Public Relations

Wendy Scott

Voter Editor

Karrie Bullock

newsletter@lwvstanislaus.org

Voter Service

Ellen Meyer

voterservice@lwvstanislaus.org

Board Administrator

Lynn Kelso

OFF-BOARD

Membership

Colleen Norby

Voter Service

Marsha Waggoner

Web Master

Open

Lunch and Learn

Joan Goldsmith

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box E, Modesto 95352

209-524-1698

www.lwvstanislaus.org

National Action: The Right to Vote Continues to be Challenged

NATIONAL: The League of Women Voters of the United States joined with the LWV of Kansas and the LWV Arizona to file comments with the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) regarding the request made by the Secretaries of State of Kansas and Arizona to modify the national mail-in voter registration form to include requirements that applicants supply documentary proof of citizenship. (For details, go to: www.lwv.org/files/Kobach.EACComment_LWV_1-3-1.psf)

This follows up earlier actions by the LWVUS to join the Kansas and Arizona Leagues to intervene in a lawsuit between the states of Kansas and Arizona and the EAC on the same subject. The court decided in the League's favor and is allowing the League to participate fully in the case on the grounds that the League's voter registration work would be directly and adversely impacted by such a requirement. Watch for further developments on the LWVUS pages or Google Kbach LWV.

STATE: In a lengthy article, "Health agency hit on voter sign-up", the Modesto Bee (December 28, 2013) presents criticism by representatives of the ACLU California Voting Rights Project, the California Civic Engagement Project of the UC Davis Center for Regional Change and others, on the failure of the State's health insurance exchange, Covered California, to fulfill its required participation in offering voter registration opportunities to those signing up for health insurance coverage. The LWV also supports offering these legally required opportunities to potential voters.

Federal and state officials have determined that health insurance exchanges meet the criteria established by the 20-year old National Voter Registration Act (aka Motor Voter Act). California Secretary of State Debra Bowen insisted in a letter of May 15, 2013, that California become a "national leader" in offering voter registration opportunities during health insurance enrollment. In the face of criticism of Covered California's failure to fulfill its obligations, Anne Gonzales, a spokesperson for the agency, "countered that the exchange is working diligently to meet its obligations under federal and state voter registration laws. It recently appointed a staff member to work as a liaison with advocacy groups" and took other measures to implement the requirements.

Only 54.2% of Californians of voting age are registered, the lowest rate of all fifty states, except Hawaii. Many advocates had hailed Secretary of State Bowen's declaration, hoping that the more than 5 million persons who had no health insurance, roughly equal to the number of unregistered voters, would soon take advantage of the new opportunities. However, the more than 400,000 residents who have enrolled in health coverage, excluding MediCal, have not been offered the promised opportunity to have simultaneous registration assistance.

Hanna Renning, State and National Action

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

ADAM GREY
SUSAN PARK

**Local Action: Positions of the League of Women Voters of Stanislaus County: Local
Program (2013-2014) League of Women Voters of Stanislaus County**

Housing (Adopted 1975, updated 1982 and 2003)

We recognize that the need for shelter is fundamental, and that a diverse population will desire a wide selection of housing options. Therefore, we:

- A. Support equal opportunity in housing options in Stanislaus County.
- B. Support local measures to increase the supply of a diverse range of housing types to serve a diverse population.
- C. Support local measures to increase the supply of safe and affordable housing for everyone.

Land Use (Adopted 1976, updated 1988 and 2003)

We recognize that land use decisions have an impact on many areas, notably on the quality of life and on the economy; and we recognize that land itself is an irreplaceable resource that needs to be preserved and protected. We support land use planning that:

- A. Protects farmland outside clearly defined urban boundaries to avoid unnecessary conversion of farmlands.
- B. Protects the overall quality of environment (soil, air, and water).
- C. Provides urban development contiguous with existing development where urban services can be provided.
- D. Provides adequate funding for infrastructure needs (transportation, schools, parks, government services and public utilities.)

Land use planning should involve cooperation between and among the various local regional government bodies.

Adult Criminal Justice (Adopted 1980, 1982 and 1984) We support:

- A. The funding in Stanislaus County of a wide range of alternatives to incarceration for all but the physically dangerous offender.
- B. Efforts to further the expansion of rehabilitative programs and facilities for persons convicted of drug and alcohol abuse.
- C. A greater allocation of funds within the criminal justice budget for crime prevention, crime detection and rehabilitation

Child Abuse and Neglect (Adopted 1985, updated 1987)

- A. We recognize child abuse as a societal problem; therefore, we support: Legislation, which addresses the jurisdictional, organizational and procedural problems in the prosecution of child abuse cases.
- B. Modification of the courtroom process to accommodate child victims.
- C. Consistent reporting and recording of child abuse and neglect cases and development of comprehensive statistics.
- D. Broad-based prevention programs that are accessible to all family members and take into consideration the ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity of those being served.
- E. Efforts of public and private agencies to continually focus public attention on the problems of child abuse and neglect.

Local Library Finance (Adopted 1994, updated 1997 and 2003)

We support long-term, consistent funding of the Stanislaus County Free Library.

- A. We strongly support a dedicated source of funds which could be used only for the Library
- B. Basic library services should remain free and become more accessible to all Stanislaus County residents in a nondiscriminatory manner.
- C. We support a long-range goal of maintaining a library system of excellence.

Gang Violence (Adopted 2007)

In order to address the problem of criminal gang activity within our community, we support the development of culturally diverse intervention and enrichment programs at the elementary school level and beyond.

- A. Such programs may include recreational, athletic, academic, creative and/or social activities.
- B. We encourage allocation of resources to fund these programs through public, private and/or nonprofit organizations.

Municipal Government (Adopted 2008)

To assure that municipal government is open, accountable, and responsive to residents and to promote full participation by citizens, we support:

- A system that balances neighborhood needs with citywide perspective
- A system that encourages and offers opportunity for increased voter and candidate participation (Should districts be part of a proposal, criteria for establishing districts are addressed by LWVC. Also, LWVC has a position favoring majority decisions for elections officials.)

LOCAL ACTION: Statement on Wood Colony element of City of Modesto General Plan Amendments

The League of Women Voters of Stanislaus County (LWVSC)'s position on Land Use recognizes that protecting farmland outside clearly defined urban boundaries is critical to avoid unnecessary conversion of farmlands. The City of Modesto's recent General Plan Amendments include a land use element, which would designate 1825 acres of farmland west of Highway 99 (aka Wood Colony) for industrial and commercial development.

LWVSC is strongly opposed to the passage of this portion of the General Plan Amendments for several reasons: the overwhelming opposition of Wood Colony residents, agriculture's significance to our economy, and the irreversible loss of prime farmland, for which this decision surely is the catalyst.

We opposed a similar proposal in 2010, when the Council was considering adding the Beckwith/Dakota Comprehensive Planning District to Modesto's Sphere of Influence. At that time, the Economic Development Committee recommended not adding this area. We feel the same issues remain salient: The area west of Highway 99 is prime farmland, with rich loam suitable for year-round farming a variety of crops. Once this land is developed, it can never be replaced. One need only look to San Jose and its regional sprawl to see the result of this type of decision-making. It's the same type of growth to which we give our assent if the Council decides to designate Wood Colony for industrial and commercial development.

The proponents of this Land Use element note that it will help create jobs in Stanislaus County. However, actual job creation is an unknown factor; it seems foolish to trade irreplaceable farm land, which does in fact produce a real economic benefit, for uncertain claims of job creation. Furthermore, development in this part of the county would require infrastructure improvements which would burden residents (both in and outside city limits), in exchange for nebulous projections of economic growth.

We urge the Modesto City Council to consider the legacy it leaves to city government as well as to the entire community. This proposal is not a substitute for effective, sustainable land use planning. We join others in urging the Council to reject the land use element of the General Plan Amendments on January 28.

Sincerely,

Mary Giventer, President League of Women Voters of Stanislaus County mgiventer@pacbell.net

Stella Beratlis, Local Action Director League of Women Voters of Stanislaus County stellaberatlis@gmail.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

[\(Check Website for Updates\)](#)

Tuesday, January 28th 5:30pm	Modesto City Council Meeting Vote to Amend General Plan re Wood Colony. 1010 10th Street, Modesto
Thursday, January 30th 12:00 pm	Lunch and Learn: Stanislaus County Clerk-Recorder Lee Lundrigan Jacobs Fine Dining, 2501 McHenry Ave, Modesto. Cost is \$13
Wednesday, February 12th 6:00pm	LWVUS and LWVSC Program Planning 6pm followed by Board meeting Seena Rhine's home.
Thursday, February 27 12:00pm	Lunch and Learn: District Attorney representative to speak on gang violence. Jacobs Fine Dining, 2501 McHenry Ave, Modesto. Cost is \$13
Tuesday, March 18 10:00am	Kim Klein Workshop "Non-Profits Talking Taxes" Cal State University Stanislaus

**League of Women Voters of Stanislaus County
P.O. Box E
Modesto, CA 95352**

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.