



# THE VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF STANISLAUS COUNTY

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Serving the Citizens of Stanislaus County, California

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## *President's Message*

The League just finished a very good year and is beginning a new one. Thanks to Marsha Waggoner for hosting a very pleasant evening for our Annual Meeting. Thanks to all those others who brought such tasty treats and drinks. Congratulations to Ann Krabach for being selected as our sustaining member this year. With all her hard work over the years, including this one, it was richly deserved. I would like to thank all the Board and Off-Board members who served us so well this past year. Thanks to those members going off the Board, Margie Neder and Tiffany Gordon, for all their work. Welcome to the Board new members Julie Saugstad and Hanna Renning and Mildred Kinser to an Off- Board position. A special thank you and appreciation goes to all those members of the Board and Off-Board positions who are continuing to serve. Without your continued support we could not survive.

This coming year looks like a daunting one as we have the national, state assembly and some local elections coming up and a multitude of state propositions to plow through. Putting on the Pros & Cons forums could be interesting, to say the least.

I am looking forward to the National Convention this year in June. There are so many issues that the National could decide on studying that the process of narrowing it down will be a challenge.

Thank you for having the faith in me to continue as president of the LWVSC. With all your help, I look forward to a productive year.

*Seena Rhine, President LWVSC*

## **Voter Service**

Thank you to all who helped run the forums for Congressional District 10. We had a lower than usual turnout, but the forum participants gave the community an opportunity to hear their positions on the critical issues of the day. If you would like to see the forum, it is available in its entirety at this link:  
<https://vimeo.com/165459062> generously uploaded and edited by Richard Anderson.

League recognizes the changing landscape for outreach and advertising for our events, and has begun more outreach through a Facebook page. Please take a moment to navigate on over and scroll through, and if you have a Facebook page, please "Like" us and allow for notifications, and invite a friend or two. You can find the link here: [www.facebook.com/LWVStanislausCounty](http://www.facebook.com/LWVStanislausCounty)

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## ***Lunch & Learn: Joel Andrews, Patterson City Planner***

Joel Andrews, City Planner for the City of Patterson, was our speaker for the April Lunch and Learn. Joel pointed out that planning is a very personal process for each city. The city planner's job is to review every new business, building and development project and try to make sure that it fits in with the city's vision for itself, which is known as the General Plan. The General Plan guides everything a city does from how many police and firefighters a city needs, how to ensure better health for residents, how to keep the water systems functioning, what kinds of industries a city wants to attract and how recreation programs should be provided.

Joel notes that, on its most basic level, planning is trying to balance the desires of the individual with the good of the public. Patterson has dealt with a number of challenges over the years. During the housing boom Patterson was one of the fastest growing cities in California; the population grew from 11,000 in 2000 to 21,000 in 2008. When the recession started in 2008, Patterson was hit hard. At one point one in four homes in Patterson was somewhere in the foreclosure process. No one took responsibility for these homes so weeds overtook the lawns, swimming pools became public nuisances and copper was ripped out of walls. The city passed an ordinance in 2008 requiring banks to care for the abandoned homes, which they owned, and over the past few years the homes have recovered.

In 1999 Patterson was determined by the County to be the best site for a business park along I-5. The city and county worked jointly to prepare the site, and it has become a major distribution center location for Kohls, Longs, Amazon, Grainger, Platt Industries and Restoration Hardware. The Amazon building is one million square feet and Restoration Hardware covers 1.5 million square feet. Patterson has positioned themselves to be business friendly by offering sites that are "shovel ready". The land is already zoned and the environmental review, which can sometimes take years, are complete. In some situations, the only thing businesses need is a building permit so they can quickly get started building their business. Patterson has generated enough business park activity to make itself well known across the United States as a potential site for business expansion. Joel contrasted the three big business parks in the area and what makes them attractive to businesses: Turlock Business Park has water and sewage capabilities so it is ideal for agricultural related businesses; Modesto's Beard Park has access to rail transportation; and Patterson offers large areas of land.

In 2010, Patterson approved an aggressive update to the General Plan. During the public process, the city heard over and over about the amenities that people wanted: a hospital, a movie theater, more restaurants, a bowling alley and shopping opportunities. The stumbling block for Patterson is that many businesses have a model that requires a larger population than Patterson currently has. An array of new housing is needed. Patterson has very few multi-family housing units available and has faced difficulty convincing developers and their financers that the multi-family model works in the Valley. They are hopeful that the success of developments around the county will change this mindset.

***Ruby Hennessey, Lunch and Learn Co-Coordinator***

## **Spotlight!**

This month's Spotlight! article features our newly selected **Sustaining Member for 2016, Ann Krabach**. It is because of our amazing membership that we are able to do all that we do for Stanislaus County and League.

Ann Krabach was born in Brazil, Indiana, and attended Drake University in Iowa. Her interest in League stemmed from a research paper she wrote for her class on women and politics. Through that paper, she became acquainted with the League of Women Voters and decided she wanted to join when she reached voting age (21 at that time). However, life intervened; she married, had a young son, and moved to Merced where her husband was stationed at Castle Air force Base. There she became active in the Merced LWV. Her second son was born in Merced, and after her husband completed his military service, the family moved to Modesto, where Ann immediately joined the LWV Stanislaus County. She became involved in the state mental health study and served in other Board positions. She returned to school at CSU Stanislaus, and after graduating joined the English faculty where she directed the Writing Center. In her teaching career at CSU Stanislaus she found League materials invaluable for providing students with information about issues and as models for writing research and opinion papers. At election time, students learned to appreciate the value of clear, concise information as they used Leagues' Pros and Cons to understand ballot measures.



### **CALENDAR OF EVENTS** [\(Check Website for Updates\)](#)

<b>Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup> 6:00pm-8:00pm</b>	<b>Board meeting. Hosted at Seena Rhine's. Potluck welcoming new Board members and thanking outgoing Board members. Please call (209) 524-1698 for directions or for a ride.</b>
<b>Thursday, June 30<sup>th</sup> 12:00pm-1:30pm</b>	<b>Lunch &amp; Learn: Kristina Hacker, Turlock Journal Editor. "Continued Relevance of the Community Newspaper"</b>

## **Report on the Higher Education Study**

*The consensus meeting for the higher education study was held on Monday, May 9 at 2 PM at the home of Mary Giventer.*

We strongly agreed that the purpose of higher education is to promote the personal, professional and/or occupational goals of students and stemming from that would be opportunities for leadership and economic mobility. We agreed that an educated population promoted the economic and civic goals of local communities and the state.

**Equitable Access:** We struggled some with the language of some of the questions and based on that language did not reach a consensus on what “evidenced” an increase in diversity. In our comment section, we noted that there is a wide gap between enrollment rates and articulation rates at CCCs, CSUs and UCs. This gap is even more pronounced for minority, low income and first generation students. We felt increasing the diversity in enrollment was meaningless unless there was also an increase in the graduation rate for those students. We did strongly agree that the transfer process from CCCs to four-year colleges should be transparent and seamless. Based on interviews we had with students at CSU Stanislaus, it was apparent that improved counseling was needed for all students.

**Funding and Affordability:** We disagreed with the idea that the state should pay for all public higher education. We did agree that the state and students or their families should share the cost based on their ability to pay. We strongly agreed that financial aid should be sufficient to make college affordable for all students and strongly agreed that effective financial counseling should be available to enable students to plan and access financing. We strongly agreed that the state should provide stable, adequate, and predictable funding for higher education. However, we disagreed with the idea that the state should develop additional funding streams or levy a tax specifically to support higher education. In our comments, we stated that before those measures be considered a thorough internal audit of university budgets and an analysis of university spending was needed.

**Preparedness:** We strongly agreed that when students graduate from high school, they should be prepared for college-level work or for occupational training/employment. We strongly agreed that there needed to be more coordination between high schools and higher education facilities including improved use of the senior year and more opportunities such as AP classes. We also agreed that advising should be available to students to make them aware of the wide range of both college and occupational opportunities.

**Opportunities/Barriers:** We strongly support increasing the enrollment capacity at both CSUs and UCs. However, we commented that we wanted to see enrollment priority given to California residents. We agreed with CCCs developing BA/BS programs but felt that those degrees should be limited to majors that are not generally available at four-year universities. We agreed that distance learning, both satellite centers and on-line learning, should be utilized but in our comment section noted that this needed to be approached carefully to ensure the appropriateness and quality of the offering.

Finally, we agreed that there should be a mechanism to provide coordination of the three sectors of higher education, to analyze and evaluate how the system is functioning and make recommendations for improvement. However, we do not feel that another layer of bureaucracy is warranted. California already has a State Superintendent of Public Education and a Department of Education. There appears to be considerable redundancy in their roles and we believe higher education oversight should fit within the existing state educational structure.

This was a very interesting study during which I learned much about public higher education. I thank everyone who participated and I look forward to seeing the position the League will adopt.

***Mary Giventer, Vice President***

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**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.**