



The Voter

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®] OF STANISLAUS COUNTY

December 2017 Serving the Citizens of Stanislaus County, California

VOL. 65, NO. 6

President's Message

At this time of year it is usual to reflect back on the past year. Frankly, I found 2017 to be a confusing and, often, disheartening year. Regardless of your political persuasion, it is hard not to be dismayed by the extreme divisiveness that pervades our political system. Honest differences of opinion on policy are ignored with no civil discussion, let alone any attempt to compromise or seek common ground. Instead, our politicians have resorted to insults and name-calling, behavior we don't tolerate from our children. The number of prominent men facing allegations of sexual harassment is mind-boggling. The number of allegations makes it apparent that these are not a few isolated incidents, but in many areas a pervasive culture that even in 2017 does not respect women in the workplace.

But there is a flip side that gives me hope. Women are being listened to and action to hold these men accountable for their conduct is being taken. I am hopeful this will make a lasting change in our workplace culture. Political activism is resurging. Letters, phone calls, emails and signed petitions to politicians are way up. Congressional town hall meetings draw large crowds. Demonstrations, thankfully usually peaceful, are common. "Democracy is not a spectator sport" has long been a League motto, and in 2017 many people left the sidelines to participate.

One of my favorite experiences this year was seeing the musical *Hamilton*. Not only was it great theater, but it was also a timely reminder that our Founding Fathers were not saints. They espoused lofty ideals, such as all men being created equal, yet failed to live them in their personal lives. Many owned slaves and they all considered women little more than possessions. They had heated arguments that led to deep divisions and degenerated into personal attacks. They even had their share of sexual misconduct and scandal. Yet these imperfect men were able to create a government that, while not perfect, has served us well for more than 200 years. I feel confident it will continue to do so as long as we remain informed, active citizens.

Best wishes for a happy holiday season. ■

Mary

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Judge Stacey Speiller



Judge Stacy Speiller

On December 8, Stacey Speiller was sworn in as the newest and youngest judge on the Stanislaus Superior Court bench by Judge Ricardo Cordova. Judges Speiller and Cordova have both been members of the LWVSC. On Stacey’s invitation to our members to be present at her investiture, several were present to witness the event.

The ceremony began with Stacey’s children, Austin and Allison, leading family members, members of the bar and numerous friends in the Pledge of Allegiance. Several people in attendance had many positive things to say of the new judge: a recurrent theme was that she is nice and truly cares for the people she works for and with. She was a partner at Cash-Dudley, Speiller and Torres Professional Law Corp. in Modesto, where much of her work was with conservancies.

We wish her much success in her new position on the bench. ■

Calendar of Events

Lunch and Learn

Lunch and Learn is on temporary during the month of December.

Lunch and Learn for Thursday, January 25, 2018

Our speaker will be either Tom Orvis or Wayne Zipser from the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau. He will speak about water matters, land use issues and/or other topics of interest to the Farm Bureau which are important for the general public to know about. ■

Newest Members

We welcome three new members: Shelley Schribner, Modesto; Bryanna Wilson, Oakdale, and Mickey Williamson, Murphys. ■

Stories from MJC

Community colleges are democracy's colleges; they level the playing field.

Modesto Junior College Dean of Advancement George Boodrookas spoke at our annual Holiday Fling. One of his responsibilities is to be Executive Director of the MJC Foundation, which raises funds for student scholarships. Of all philanthropy in higher education, only 2 percent is provided to community colleges; the other 98 percent goes to public and private four-year universities. Dr. Boodrookas' presentation described the challenges and the successes at MJC.

As economic times have changed, so have the challenges faced by prospective students and the community colleges. New jobs require more than a high school diploma, and the California community college system is the largest provider of workforce training in the nation.

Who comes to MJC? More than 80 percent of students are eligible for some form of financial aid. More than 65 percent work at least part time. Sixty-five percent are from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups. Sixty-five percent are first-generation college students. Only 33 percent of students take a full class load of 12 units or more. This is reflected in the fact that 43 percent of students who expressed intent to leave MJC with a degree or a certificate of transfer units actually do so within six years.

To build support for MJC, Dr. Boodrookas has been reaching out to former students. More than 670,000 students have passed through MJC during its 96 years. Dr. Boodrookas has developed connections with about 30,000; 80 percent of alumni and donors reside within eighty miles of MJC. The Foundation newsletter profiles many of these. He told stories of many alumni who describe their experiences — sometimes life-changing — at MJC, including his immigrant-mother, who took an English class at MJC in 1956. (He showed us her textbook!) He told the story of a former gang member, a woman who overcame homelessness to become a CSUS instructor, a track star who became a coach. Many alumni have become generous donors to the MJC Foundation and its scholarship programs. Watch for MJC's 100 -year celebration in four years! ■

— Marie Bairey

PS: Thank you to Lynne Fenderson for again opening her lovely home for LWVSC Holiday Fling. We appreciate her generous support of League.

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.

Measure S Passes

Measure S passed by a good majority on November 7. With 51,011 voting, only 17.69 percent (or 9025 voters) voted No on the measure, according to <http://stanvote.com/returns.shtm>. In other words, 41,986 (82.31 percent) voted in favor the measure. Those who donated time, money and expertise to the cause are to be congratulated and thanked for such a resounding victory. ■



Membership Event

LWVSC held a membership event at Tri-Chromatic Gallery, 1321 J Street, Modesto on election night. Several interested people and current members showed up to enjoy the hors d'œuvres and other goodies available as everyone awaited the news of the elections. ■



LWVSC President Mary Giventer welcomes the guests.



Some of the attendees.
Photos provided.

Find us on the Web

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