

# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TULARE COUNTY

“... To promote informed citizen participation ...”

# THE VOTER

SEPTEMBER 2015

## LWVTC Calendar

**September 10** 9:30 am  
Board meeting at Faye Zeeb’s home, 1103 S. Linda Vista, Visalia

**SEPTEMBER 15** Noon  
Unit meeting at Sue Sa’s Club House, 699 W. Center, Visalia; Program: LWV State Convention report (see p. 2); Reserve by Sept. 11 (see box below)

**September 14–25**  
High School Voter Registration (see p. 3)

**September 22**  
National Voter Registration Day

**October 8** 9:30 am  
Board meeting at Dale Simmons’ home

**October 27** 5:30–8:00 pm  
Community Water Center’s Water Justice Celebration; at 210 Cafe, Visalia; LWVTC supports this event

**OCTOBER 20** Noon  
Unit meeting at Sue Sa’s; Program: Money in Politics study; Reserve by Oct. 16

**November 12** 9:30 am  
Board meeting at Dale Simmons’ home

**NOVEMBER 17** Noon  
Unit meeting at Sue Sa’s; Program: Money in Politics study; Reserve by Nov. 13

## WELCOME FROM PRESIDENT DENISE

Welcome, members and friends. I trust your summer was restful, and you were able to catch up on your favorite projects. Summer is eventful for the League, too. In late July, LWV celebrated the anniversary of the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, which produced the Declaration of Sentiments, one of the nation’s most important historical documents advocating for women’s rights, including the first official call for the right to vote for women. The 300 men and women attending the Convention understood that access to the vote is not about politics, but about justice and equality.

This past week marked the 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Women’s Equality Day. Founder Carrie Chapman Catt called for “a memorial dedicated to departed leaders and the sacrifices they made for our cause, to the scores of victories won,... nor will any suffragist propose a monument built of marble which few would see and fewer comprehend. The most appropriate and patriotic memorial would be...a League of Women Voters.”

The work of the League remains strong in protecting the right to vote, and to make sure access to our elections are free and fair. Terry Cornelius will be leading us in registering Visalia and Tulare high school seniors to vote. As students are so tech savvy, registration will be done on-line with computers at the school and with the student’s phones. This will happen the weeks of September 14 and 21 (see p. 3), which are designated for high school registration by the California Secretary of State. If you would like to help, please contact Terry at 713-0378.

In August, our local League board decided that we would join LWV Fresno for their Higher Education study. Jeanine Blessing and Terry will lead the national study: Money in Politics. You might find it interesting to go through some of the material on the [national web site](#).

You may wonder just how and why LWVC does some of the things the way they do. Maile Melkonian and Terry traveled to San Diego in May to the State Convention, and will share some of the highlights and insights into the League process at the September meeting (see p. 2).

I look forward to meeting with you at Sue Sa’s on the third Tuesday of the month. By kicking off our local League efforts with registration of our younger community

members, we are carrying on with exactly what Carrie Chapman Catt spoke about.

— Denise Nelson

Don’t forget to make your  
**Lunch Reservations**

Contact: **Mary Ann Bringhurst**  
on or before Fri. **September 11**  
by e-mail ([newellgb@hotmail.com](mailto:newellgb@hotmail.com))  
or phone (732-1251).

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**Editorial Musings**

**THE 19<sup>TH</sup>  
AMENDMENT:  
POSTSCRIPT**

We Leaguers are all very well aware that the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution assured women the right to vote. Have you ever read it? It's stunning in its brevity:

*"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.*

*Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."*

That's it in its entirety.

Both the League and the amendment turned 95 this year. Women's suffrage, of course, was the impetus for the League's creation, in February 1920—with Eleanor Roosevelt as vice president for legislative affairs, no less!

Per Article V of the Constitution, three-fourths of the states had to OK the new law. Tennessee, as the 36th to ratify (we were 48 states at the time), sealed the deal on August 20, 1920.

What's shocking to me is how long it took the remaining 12 states to ratify:

- Connecticut, Vermont and Delaware all ratified by spring 1923, then...
- Maryland in 1941
- Virginia in 1952
- Alabama in 1953
- Florida in 1969
- Georgia & Louisiana in 1970
- North Carolina in 1971
- South Carolina in 1973 and, get this...
- Mississippi in 1984.

It strikes me that most of these latecomers are the same states that are enacting increasingly restrictive voter registration laws today.

**State Convention Debrief**

*What's interesting about the Convention, and how does it affect you?*

Your intrepid representatives—Maile Melkonian (LWVTC official delegate this year) and Terry Cornelius—spent four mid-May days in sunny San Diego...but hardly saw the sun at all! As expected, the biennial State Convention kept them quite busy, and they'll be reporting on what went on.

Maile arrived a day early, so she could participate in a tour of San Diego and Tijuana, Mexico, focussing on "The Deportation Dilemma." She'll take you along, via slide show, to the U.S. Consulate, Friendship Park at the border wall, a university and a shelter for deportees—to flesh out various aspects of an issue of concern statewide, but especially in southern California.

The Keynote speaker was the state's top election official, brand-new Secretary of State **Alex Padilla**. He has some exciting ideas about voter registration and how to encourage increased turnout, which they'll share with us.

Workshops are, of course, a major part of the Convention. Terry's favorite was one on a movement called "Civil Discourse." She'll explain how the San Luis Obispo League—a model for this concept—has gotten every town in their county to commit to better democratic communication.

They'll update us on critical votes taken at the state level that affect our Unit, and they'll go over which issues are League topics for study—at both the state and national levels—which will help determine our programming for the coming year. See page 4 for some snapshots.

Maile and Terry brought back some souvenirs from the Convention. There are a limited number of them, so be sure to arrive early to get one!



A LWV effort in 1920

**THE VOTER**  
Monthly newsletter of the  
**League of Women Voters of Tulare County**

P.O. Box 3011  
Visalia, CA 93278  
<http://tularecounty.ca.lwvnet.org>

|                   |                  |          |
|-------------------|------------------|----------|
| President:        | Denise Nelson    | 627-1306 |
| Membership Chair: | Jeanine Blessing | 635-4456 |
| Editor:           | Maile Melkonian  | 802-3315 |

## STUDY TOPICS for 2015–17

*These are the Study issues prioritized by LWVUS and LWVC. Covering all of them would be daunting, so your Board is determining on which we will devote time this coming year. Our Study schedule will be announced at the Unit meeting.*

### **NATIONAL**

#### **Money in Politics**

The central question is the extent to which the First Amendment protects the rights of individuals and organizations to express their political views through independent expenditures and the finance of election campaign activities; and how those rights, if any, should be protected and reconciled with the interests set out in the League’s current position.

#### **Constitutional Amendment**

The goal is to thoroughly understand the process by which the U.S. Constitution can be amended—including the constitutional convention option—and identifying the gaps and challenges in those methods, with a view to possibly taking action on the Money in Politics issue.

### **High School VOTER REGISTRATION**

Voter reg is at the core of our mission. The League keeps at the cutting edge of changes in election law, and we have enthusiastically accommodated the new on-line process—especially appreciated by our community’s youngest eligibles. As the Secretary of State has designated Sept. 14–25 as “High School Voter Education Weeks,” this month will be especially busy.

If you’d like to help in this important effort, **contact Terry Cornelius** (713-0378, [terrymcs@sbcglobal.net](mailto:terrymcs@sbcglobal.net))

### **STATE**

#### **Higher Education**

Concerns are: the accessibility of quality public higher education, funding sources and allocations, and student debt and affordability. The goal is to arrive collectively at a position that will enable state and local Leagues to take action.

#### **Climate, Sustainable Water & Protecting the Environment**

This includes focus on equitable water policy, sustainable communities and climate change. Implementation of the Proposition 1 water bond, groundwater plans, the Bay Delta Conservation Plan, and proposed federal legislation are integral to the discussion

#### **Election Reform and Voting Rights**

The central question is how to support measures that protect every citizen's right to vote, and ensure the government's responsibility to protect this right.

#### **Minimum/Living Wage**

One of the goals of social policy in the U.S. should be to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families. The most effective social programs are those designed to prevent or reduce poverty.

STAY TUNED ...

WE’LL BE HAVING A

### **New Members’ Reception**

*How does the League work? What, exactly is a ‘study,’ and how do our local opinions influence national policy? What projects sound like something I’d like to get involved in? This’ll be a chance to learn about the League — and meet some friendly folks!*

New members will be contacted with details.





Calif. Secretary of State Alex Padilla's keynote speech laid out some ambitious election-law objectives. Lauding the League's decades of voters'-rights work, he hopes to garner our help moving forward.



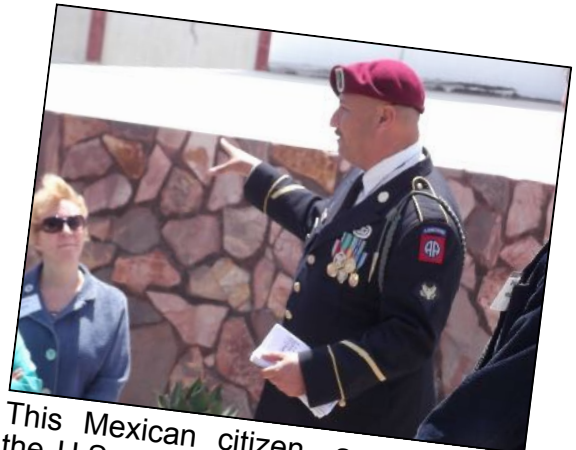
Taking a convivial break from the proceedings are our Terry Cornelius, national President Elisabeth MacNamara, state President Helen Hutchison and LWVTC delegate Maile Melkonian. Among other benefits, Convention is a chance to find out what's happening throughout the League universe.

# LWVC CONVENTION SNAPSHOTS

MAY 14-17, 2015  
SAN DIEGO



The Civil Discourse session—one of several workshops and caucuses—sparked a lot of interest. Finding ways for people with different views to communicate respectfully has become a popular goal.



This Mexican citizen—a veteran of the U.S. military—was deported after serving. As a member of a non-profit group for people in his situation, he tells his story at the border wall. This was one of several perspectives illuminated by “The Deportation Dilemma” tour of Tijuana.

## Kepler Speaks on State Politics

By Dale Simmons

We did something a little different for our Annual Meeting last May: we asked a local media celebrity to speak, and invited the public to join us. About half the attendees were non-members, necessitating a larger luncheon venue, the Lamplighter Inn.

Prof. Mark Kepler is known to most as the TV host of the very informative “Maddy Report” (until recently on Valley PBS, but now on ABC). Since June 2004, he has been the Kenneth L. Maddy Professor of Public Affairs and the executive director of the Maddy Institute in Fresno. He also produces the “Maddy Report—Valley Views Edition” (radio & podcast) programs and the *Maddy Daily* e-newsletter; a free resource for current news articles that his organization emails to subscribers each morning.



Asked to talk about state politics and local implications, Kepler covered a broad range of issues germane to our county and state—the budget, education, environment, Medi-Cal, climate change, taxes of income and potentially of services, and initiatives. As Kepler often has opposing sides of an issue speak on the same TV show, he can present a nuanced perspective. The Q&A period was especially lively, enjoyable and informative.

At the Maddy Institute, Kepler coordinates its Citizenship Academy and intern-scholar programs in Washington, D.C., Sacramento and throughout the Central Valley, as well as organizes the Maddy Associates Speaker Series, and various training programs designed for government leaders.

In addition, Kepler is a labor-management arbitrator with the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service and a civil rights mediator for the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. He has also served as a Judge Pro Tem with the Fresno County Superior Court.

Prior to joining the Maddy Institute, Kepler was the Director of Graduate Programs at the Craig School of Business at California State University, Fresno from 1998 through 2003. He continues to teach employment law, industrial relations and ethics at the Craig School.

A native easterner, Kepler started his career as a labor-management attorney on the East Coast. He has three degrees: a business bachelor’s from State University of New York, a master’s in industrial relations and a law degree, both from University of Wisconsin.

[Ed.: We can thank Unit secretary Dale Simmons for energetically organizing this event. She and the speaker go back a couple of decades, when they were active on the “Coalition for Community Trails” board which helped drive the Clovis-Fresno rails-to-trails conversion. From that and other volunteer work, Kepler was honored as Clovis Citizen of the Year. He also currently chairs the Clovis Community Foundation.]

Of course, business must be taken care of at an Annual Meeting. Vice President Mary Lou Burberry summarized a busy year for the League, and presented the 2015–16 budget, which passed by a voice vote of the membership. Officers were also elected as follow:

### 2015–2016 OFFICERS

**PRESIDENT — Denise Nelson**  
**VICE PRESIDENT — Mary Lou Burberry**  
**SECRETARY — Dale Simmons**  
**TREASURER — Mary Ann Bringhurst**

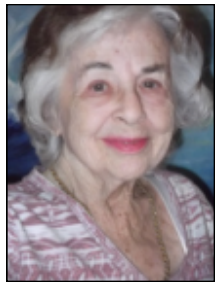


## Member Profile

### LITA REID

What is 15-year LWVTC member Lita Reid's mantra? "I'm not bored!" she insists. Even a casual conversation with her will bear that out. "I've always liked knowing what is going on in the world," she says, and that was a prime motivator when she decided to join the League years ago in Ridgecrest, in the Mojave Desert.

As it turned out, the town was too small to sustain the unit but, undeterred, she and some of her cohorts became members-at-large. Among the happy discoveries she found upon moving to Visalia were the Tulare Co. Symphony and a full-fledged League.



This Detroit native comes from a family of musicians and artists. ('Lita' is not a nickname. Her mother, a fan of cinema, actually named her only child after a girlfriend of Charlie Chaplin—and their surname was Chatlin!) The family moved to Hollywood in her childhood. Lita learned to play the piano at an early age, and was teaching it by the time she was 15.

"Piano lessons helped get my husband through school," she remembers. Robert became an engineer, first for the Marine Corps Reserve, which took them to Tennessee, Kansas and Florida. The Navy brought them to China Lake and Ridgecrest, where they raised their two daughters and two sons.

Lita's education has spanned a lifetime. Starting as a music major at U.C.L.A., she left to get married. Later, she studied journalism and government at Sacramento State. In Ridgecrest, *The Daily Independent* had her do a review when actor Vincent Price performed locally. She worked her way up to city editor.

And then she discovered the law. Lita studied at the Ridgecrest School of Law, this time graduating, with a J.D. "One of my fellow students was a cousin of Rosa Parks," she says of a particularly memorable occasion. "She [Parks] came to speak to our law class, and we had lunch with her."

Sadly, Lita lost her husband soon after she passed the Bar. By then, they had relocated to Visalia, where she set up a private law practice. In both Ridgecrest and Visalia, Lita has been very active in public service—the range includes General Plan advisory committees, the Retail Growth Task Force and the Environmental Committee. She even ran for Congress once!

"I used to do a lot of skiing," she recalls, including Ski Patrol duty. She now has 10 grandchildren and six great-grandkids, and just keeping up with them keeps her pretty busy.

## Elections in the News

This item is excerpted from The Atlantic. The full article can be found at <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/03/should-voter-registration-be-automatic/388258/>.

### OREGON GOV. SIGNS AUTOMATIC REGISTRATION LAW

By Russell Berman

March 20, 2015

"I forgot to register."

It's one of the frequently cited reasons that people give every year for not voting in America ... Under a law signed [March 20] by new Governor Kate Brown [PHOTO BELOW], any eligible Oregonian with a driver's license will be automatically registered to vote and will receive a ballot by mail weeks before Election Day.

The measure is the first of its kind in the nation, and state officials project it will add 300,000 people to a voter roll that now numbers about 2.2 million. Oregon has long been an early adopter of new voting methods, having shifted to an entirely vote-by-mail system in 1998. Passage of the law ... marks a rare recent win for proponents of expanded access to the ballot box at a time when states are moving toward more restricti[ons].

The U.S. has an embarrassingly low rate of voter participation, setting it apart from other democracies in the developed world; just over one-third of eligible voters showed up in 2014, and even in the relatively high turnout election of 2008, the participation rate was only 64 percent. Yet the debate over the Oregon "motor voter" law was contentious ...

Oregonians will have the opportunity to opt out of automatic registration, and even if they don't, nothing is forcing them to return the actual ballot they receive in the mail....

The change directs the state's department of transportation to transfer data for eligible voters to the secretary of state's office so that they can be registered....



[However,] routing automatic registration only through the DMV, will miss some potential voters in low-income communities or non-drivers in Portland, which has a good public transportation system....

Still, as seen in the close, partisan votes in the Oregon legislature, the politics of automatic registration remain delicate....

# CADILLAC DESERT

## THE AMERICAN WEST AND ITS DISAPPEARING WATER

By Newell G. Bringhurst

Marc Reisner's *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water*, a classic work initially published in 1986, deals with western water policy as it evolved during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Reisner, while acknowledging the positive effects of major dam building during the 1930s and 1940s, is highly critical of a majority of misguided water projects undertaken since that time. He blames both the key individuals and government institutions involved.

Among the institutions singled out for scorn is the Bureau of Reclamation—a federal agency originally formed to bring water to the small farmer, but instead has served the interests of large corporate farms. Growing in power and influence, the Bureau deliberately underestimated the cost of projects, manipulated Congress, and promoted pork-barrel dams—some of which were not even wanted by the farmers they were intended to serve. Over time, most of the good sites for viable dams were gone, but construction continued. The Bureau's luck ran out with Idaho's Teton dam where a bad site and shortcuts led to its collapse resulting in eleven deaths and \$2 billion worth of damage.

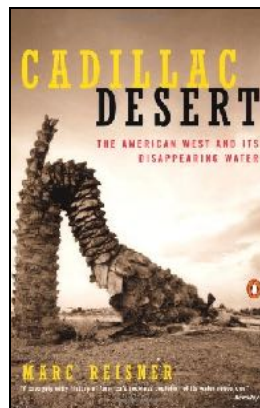
Reisner also excoriates the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, condemning it for its gross overbuilding of dams to prevent floods especially during the 30 years following World War II. Particularly egregious was the Corps' construction of Garrison Dam in North Dakota, which flooded the homes of three Indian tribes while managing to spare all the nearby white settlements.

Excessive dam building undertaken by both the Corps and Bureau also degraded the natural

environment through the destruction of birds, fish and animal habitat.

Authorizing billions of dollars in federal funds to build these dams were members of the United States Congress, unduly influenced by the special interest groups benefiting most directly, in particular, large growers and construction firms.

By Marc Reisner  
Original edition: 1986  
Viking Press  
New York  
Revised Edition: 1993  
Penguin Books  
New York  
521 pages



The author also questions the wisdom of the California projects designed to bring water to the state's populous southern cities and the fertile Central Valley—particularly the extremely arid west side. With each new dam, California's population increased. This in turn prompted yet more dams, perpetuating a vicious cycle of development and dam building continuing down to the present. Reisner expressed skepticism that the greening of California could continue indefinitely, noting the rapid depletion of the aquifers, the silting up of dams, the loss of farm land to salinity, and the increasing cost of diverting rivers.

*"Irrigation is a profoundly unnatural act."*  
*"A lot of the water being pumped out of the ground is as nonrenewable as oil."*  
— Marc Reisner

A seminal and very influential work, Reisner's *Cadillac Desert* remains most timely given the current California drought. It thus deserves the attention of all concerned citizens. One might also

hope that Reisner's provocative critique would stimulate meaningful discussion as to the best way to move forward in solving, not only the current water crisis, but also paving the way for a viable, long-range policy promoting the most efficient use of water, our most precious of natural resources.

League of Women Voters of Tulare County  
P.O. Box 3011  
Visalia, CA 93278



**Be an engaged citizen! *Join . . .***

**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
OF TULARE COUNTY**

The League is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that encourages informed and active participation in government through education and advocacy. Members include women and men of every age, race, background and political belief. The more than 1,200 local Leagues work to promote citizen action on local, state and national issues.

**Why the League ?**

Because you care about the future of America. You recognize that your rights as a citizen come with a responsibility to participate fully in the democratic process. As a member you can:

- Stay informed about the issues that concern you the most,
- Make your views heard by adding your voice to ours
- Sharpen your skills for effective leadership, networking and public outreach.

Annual membership dues are \$60.00 for individuals and \$82.00 for households. Dues and donations to the League are not deductible as charitable contributions for tax purposes.

Visitors are welcome to our regular meetings, at noon every third Tuesday of the month—September through June—at The Clubhouse, 699 W. Center St. in Visalia.