

# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TULARE COUNTY

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

# THE VOTER

FEBRUARY 2017

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

## LWVTC Calendar

**February 9** 9:30 am  
Board meeting at Dale Simmons' home

**PROGRAM PLANNING**

All members are welcome to attend any and all Board meetings. This is especially encouraged for Program Planning, as we decide what issues our Unit might study in the coming year. Your input is enthusiastically invited, as we wrap this process up **at the February Board meeting.**

**FEBRUARY 21** 11:45am  
Unit meeting at Sa Très Bien; Program: “Sustainability—Water”; Ryan Jensen, Community Water Center (see p. 2)

**Lunch Reservations**

Make these on or before Fri.  
**February 17**  
Contact: **Mary Ann Bringhurst**  
[newellgb@hotmail.com](mailto:newellgb@hotmail.com)  
or 732-1251

**March 9** 9:30 am  
Board meeting at Dale's

**March 13** 3:30 pm  
Maddy Institute event; “The Common Good: Working Together for a Secure Water Future” panel discussion at Clovis Veteran's Memorial District, 808 4th Street, Clovis

**MARCH 21** 11:45 am  
Unit meeting at Sa Très Bien; Program: Sustainability—Agriculture; TBA

## January Program Recap C.O.S.'s SCIENCE DEAN DETAILS CONCERNS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

Dr. Robert Urtecho, C.O.S. dean of Sciences, Mathematics and Engineering, presented an update on climate change to kick-off our series on Sustainability. The research botanist reminded the group that there is an overwhelming consensus among both academic and government scientists that climate change is being greatly exacerbated by human activities. Of primary concern is the massive release of greenhouse gases (notably carbon dioxide and methane) that hold heat, instead of letting it dissipate into space. Results from this increase in average global temperatures include alarming changes in weather patterns, ocean and air currents and seasons.

Urtecho's sources claim that our current drought is longer than historic norms. [Other sources say 20- 30-year droughts have been common over the past 4,000 years. —Ed.] He is especially concerned about the effects of warmer seasons and lower precipitation on our Sierra Nevada forests and Valley agriculture. His topographic slides of the Sierras show large swaths of decimated forests, which he says include die-off of multi-millions of trees. This further weakens water storage in the form of snow pack.

Another long-term effect of concern is the build-up of a variety of menacing pollutants—arsenic, selenium, nitrates and others—since the industrial age. Buttressing his argument with convincing graphs, Urtecho showed that most of these dangers are increasing hyperbolically. An interesting exception is plutonium, which spiked in the 50s and early 60s, and then dropped to insignificant since the 1963 Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

He said the governments of the world are organizing to address the growing problem. Locally, Urtecho advocates that we must continue to reduce our greenhouse gas production by using alternative energy and transportation. He says, “Because of the changing weather patterns, efforts

need to continue to store both surface and subsurface water during the wet season, increase the use of water-wise strategies, and modify business and household practices to save water.”

**April 13** 9:30 am  
Board meeting at Dale's

**APRIL 18** 11:45 am  
Unit meeting at Sa Très Bien; Program: Sustainability—Air Quality; Dr. Sandy Sherriffs, California Air Resources Board

**April 22** 10:00 am–2:00 pm  
Earth Day; across from Miki City Park, corner Mineral King & Stevenson; LWVTC exhibits

**April 28** 4:00–10:00 pm  
“Young Activists” Conference” at Redwood H.S.; LWVTC presents

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# THE POWER OF WOMEN ORGANIZING

Women made history on January 21. The Million Woman March—focussing attention on women’s issues, and endorsed by the League—turned out to be the largest single-day demonstration in the history of our species. First conceived as a march on Washington, D.C., the idea sparked imaginations across our country and around the world. It may very well be the only demonstration ever to have taken place on all seven continents—even Antarctica!

And, conservatively, it tripled (quadrupled, world-wide) its name in terms of numbers. D.C. and L.A. alone—750,000 marchers each—surpassed the million. With satellite marches in hundreds of cities across America, and some 60 international capitals, the power of women to organize was fabulously evident.

It also doubled its nominal gender and age billing, with huge turnout by men and children. Yes, pink was the predominant color, but purple—the current symbol of unity—was out in force, too. For many, it was their first demonstration ever.

I participated in the San Francisco iteration. As my friends and I neared the pre-March rally, I saw three uniformed police officers—a surprisingly

discrete presence that day. Asking them to watch for anarchists, I said, “They are not part of this event, and we do not want them

to spoil it.” They smiled comfortingly, and replied, “That’s what we’re here for, ma’am.” Indeed, the marches everywhere were immaculately peaceful, with not a single arrest reported nationwide—quite a testament to estrogen-based organizing! Not even the constant rain could dampened spirits.

As a pure expression of free speech, individuals’ messaging—most, but not all, was nonpartisan—spanned a wide variety of issues, including equal pay, anti-war, support of immigrants, environmental responsibility, reproductive rights and domestic violence awareness. Signage included: “Women’s Rights = Human Rights,” “Girls just want to have FUN-damental rights,” “I march forward because I refuse to go backwards,” and “R-E-S-P-E-C-T !”

As phenomenal as S.F. was, I am especially amazed at what happened in Visalia. An inspired group of unaffiliated gals put together a word-of-mouth effort in less than a week that attracted more than 500 marchers. That is, in some ways, even more remarkable than the quarter million who showed up in the Bay Area. What an empowerment tonic!

### Ryan Jensen

## “Sustainability—Water”

*The second in our series on “Sustainability,” this month’s focus is on what has been shaping up to be the most urgent issue in our area and the state. (See p. 3 for more.)*

By Dale Simmons

To help us understand the rapidly changing water situation in our county and environs, how it is impacting residents right now, and what the prospects for the future might be, a specialist from the acclaimed Community Water Center will bring us up to date on local developments. Ryan Jensen joined CWC in 2014. As Community Water Solutions Coordinator, he helps organize and train constituents for environmental justice campaigns around drinking water issues. A crucial goal of his efforts is to develop leadership capacity in disadvantaged partner communities throughout the San Joaquin Valley.



During his academic and professional career, Jensen has focused on collaborative and community-based approaches to the development and management of natural resources. From 2009 to 2012, he served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Mexico, working with the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas as a specialist in Integrated Watershed Management. During his service, he proposed and implemented a pilot initiative building local support and capacity for proposing and implementing community-based watershed management interventions. He also managed a project in 2007 for Engineers Without Borders, working with an interdisciplinary team to sustainably develop a clean water supply system collaboratively with a rural community in El Salvador.

Jensen holds a bachelor’s degree in natural resources management with a concentration in international development studies, and recently completed his masters in watershed science from Colorado State University. In addition, he is experienced in water quality monitoring and geographic information systems (GIS), both important tools of the trade.

## 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:	Donna Mekeel	733-4832
Editor:	Maile Melkonian	802-3315

This recent-edition factsheet is from the Community Water Center. Their website is [communitywatercenter.org](http://communitywatercenter.org).



**FACT SHEET:**

# California's Drinking Water Crisis

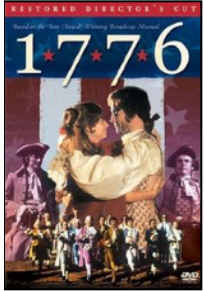
- **Each year, over one million Californians are exposed to unsafe drinking water from the taps in their homes and schools.**
  - In 2014, 1,132,848 Californians were served by public drinking water systems that did not meet Safe Drinking Water Act standards of safety.
  - This number significantly underestimates the total number of Californians without safe drinking water due to insufficient regulation and under-reporting.,
- **The problem is not only urgent but also chronic in many areas. Some communities have lacked access to safe drinking water for a decade or more.**
  - The SWRCB maintains a list of 296 small public water systems and schools that have been unable to supply safe drinking water to their communities for several years or even decades.
- **Groundwater contamination impacts the safety and cost of drinking water for millions of Californians.**
  - 21 million Californians, or 680 communities, drink water from contaminated groundwater sources. 4.1 million people, or 507 communities, are 100% reliant on contaminated groundwater as their source of drinking water. This contamination results in either lack of access to drinking water or significant costs that can make water unaffordable for low-income residents.
- **Schools throughout California have been impacted by unsafe drinking water at the tap, and many schools face recurring challenges to providing safe water.**
  - Students at as many as 1,600 California public schools may have been impacted by unsafe drinking water between 2003 and 2014, meaning they received or were associated with at least one Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) violation during that time. The SWRCB maintains a list of 60 schools and day cares on their own water systems that have been impacted by unsafe drinking water for several years.
- **During the drought, thousands of Californians have run out of water entirely.**
  - As of September 2016, 2,411 households have reported outages and 1,700 households still have verified active outages. In the past two years, California has spent over \$148 million in drinking water and wastewater drought relief for Tulare County alone.
- **Although Californians are legally guaranteed the human right to safe, clean, affordable and accessible water, many communities in California face exceedingly high water rates.**
  - When including the cost of replacement water due to contamination or drought, some families pay up to 10% of their monthly income on water alone.
- **Unsafe tap water can be found in virtually every county of the state, but areas like the San Joaquin Valley are disproportionately impacted.**
  - 56% of California's public water systems facing chronic challenges are located in the San Joaquin Valley.
  - In 2014, 432 public water systems in the San Joaquin Valley did not meet safe drinking water standards.
- **Water systems serving predominately Latino and low-income communities have disproportionately high occurrences of arsenic and nitrate contamination.**

*"Water and air, the two essential fluids on which all life depends, have become global garbage cans."*

— Jacques Cousteau

The film *1776* is a thoroughly entertaining musical rendition of the negotiating and “sausage-making” which resulted in our Declaration of Independence.

The stage is set in Philadelphia where it is hot, humid, and flies are in abundance. The Congressional delegates meet in Independence Hall.



John Adams, delegate from Massachusetts (played by William Daniels) repeatedly pesters Congress for a second to his motion to debate independence from Great Britain. Some speak that this is treasonous, and all decline for various reasons. Ben Franklin (Howard Da Silva) suggests that another colony’s delegate present the motion, and that idea is quickly carried by Richard Henry Lee (Ronald Holgate) back to the Virginia Colony for approval. Duly approved, he returns, makes the motion, and is seconded by Adams. Debate ensues!

While under duress from other delegates, especially Pennsylvania’s John Dickinson (Donald Madden), Adams and Franklin come up with a delay tactic: to produce a written document—thoughtfully outlining the arguments for independence from Great Britain—before the vote. A committee of three—Franklin, Adams and Thomas Jefferson (Ken Howard)—is formed, and the older delegates coerce the young Jefferson to pen the masterpiece. After the initial presentation to Congress, Dickinson has his own subterfuge, demanding that acceptance of the Declaration be unanimous, a seemingly impossible hurdle. After many compromises, including deletion of an anti-slavery clause, the declaration is, at last, approved unanimously on July 4, 1776. The signing of the Declaration of Independence concludes the film. John Hancock (David Ford), President of Congress, goes first—with a signature so large that the King of England would not need his glasses to read it!

## Local & State Interim Officers

### TULARE COUNTY APPOINTS INTERIM REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

December 21, 2016

Lewis Griswold, [Fresno Bee](#)

Tulare County supervisors appointed a new registrar of voters and created a new county department in the wake of what was perceived as an Election Day debacle. Supervisors voted 5-0 [on Dec. 21, 2016] to create the Department of Registrar of Voters and appointed Michelle Baldwin, chief clerk of the Board of Supervisors, as interim registrar of voters.

The action pointedly removes the function of registrar of voters from Tulare County Auditor-Controller Rita Woodard, who is also the treasurer-tax collector....

In surrounding counties, the person in charge of elections is themselves an elected official, although their array of duties varies. In Merced and Kings, the assessor and clerk-recorder is also the registrar of voters. In Fresno, the county clerk does it. In Madera, it’s the clerk-recorder. In Kern, it’s the auditor-controller-county clerk. “Most often, the registrar of voters is under the umbrella of an elected official,” said Rebecca Martinez, Madera County clerk-recorder and former president of the statewide organization of county elections officials.

The Tulare County auditor-controller, an elected office, was given the registrar of voters function in 1997 by the Board of Supervisors.... The county administrative officer will now do a study of the elections department and report to county supervisors within 90 days with recommendations. Tulare County’s next election is not until November 2017. ★

### BECERRA FILLS STATE AG VACANCY LEFT BY HARRIS

January 24, 2017

[Sacramento Bee](#)

Shortly after he was sworn in as California’s new attorney general, Xavier Becerra, a longtime liberal Democrat from Los Angeles, said he intends to “officially” form a campaign committee and launch a 2018 run for the influential post as the state’s top cop.... Becerra resigned from the House seat he’s held since 1993. At 58, he is the first Latino in California history to head the state’s Department of Justice.

Becerra is [Gov.] Brown’s pick to succeed U.S. Sen. Kamala Harris, who was elected to the U.S. Senate in November. ... Becerra positioned himself as experienced and well-positioned to tackle a turbulent two years ahead, having served more than two decades in elected office in Washington. ... He views former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder as a friend and close ally, ... ★



## Member Profile

### MARLA DECKER

“I’ve been influenced by the women around me,” says Marla Decker. “My mother strongly believed in women’s rights. She was born in 1911, so she was a feminist in her own way.” Marla’s grandmother was an immigrant from England. “She was so excited when she got her citizenship—and when she voted! I remember walking with her to the polls.”

Voting has always been important to Marla, and her philosophy is that one should vote “how you feel will help the majority—not just yourself.” “I always looked forward to those [League] *Pros and Cons*,” to keep informed on the issues. Now she helps facilitate the franchise locally, as a member of Joy Marshall’s Voter Services Registration team, by keeping reg forms supplied throughout the county. Even though she’s been an official member of the League for only six or seven years, she has been interested in the organization for a long time, donating to LWVUS, “so I always got the national newsletter.”

Marla grew up in the mountainous countryside north of Denver, Colorado, with two brothers. She met her future husband (of 61 years and counting!), Bill, in high school, and they both studied education at Colorado State in Greeley. She dropped out her sophomore year to get married.

“I think that was the most disappointing thing for my parents,” she recalls. While Bill finished his degree, she got a job with a finance company. “It was the best financial education,” she says. “I learned I never wanted to borrow!”

“In those days, California sent recruiters to other states for teachers,” she says, “and they paid the best.” So their young family moved to McFarland, where she worked in the office of the small school where he taught. Bill then taught at a high school in Shafter, before they relocated to Visalia so he could teach English at C.O.S. She remembers first seeing the town. “I thought Visalia looked so beautiful—the college campus, the mountains.” By then, they had four children.

Marla was hired by Leroy Berg, at the C.O.S. library, a position she held for 33 years. “Seeing all the new books come in, and making lists of recommendations for people—it was so exciting,” she recalls. She still loves reading.

Other things that keep her occupied are a life-long habit of walks, and keeping up with grand- and great-grandchildren—all of whom live in Tulare County. Marla complements her League work with legislative action through United Methodist Women, working on immigration and climate justice.



## Elections in the News

*This opinion piece is excerpted from The Sacramento Bee. The full article is at <http://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/dan-walters/article125044134.html>.*

### PUBLIC CAMPAIGN FINANCING IN CALIFORNIA

By Dan Walters

January 20, 2017

Public financing of campaigns [which the **League supports**, but Walters does not] is the long-sought holy grail for Common Cause and other political reform advocates. If candidates receive public funds for their campaigns, reformers theorize, they will be less beholden to special-interest contributors, more independent after winning office and thus more responsive to the needs of their constituents. ...

Theory aside, 28 years ago California voters passed **Proposition 73**, which imposed tight limits on campaign contributions but also prohibited public campaign financing for candidates for state and most local offices. The campaign contribution limits were later voided by federal courts, but the ban on public financing remained intact and has been invoked when local governments lacking charters have attempted to introduce it. Six charter cities, which are exempt from Proposition 73’s ban, have limited forms of public financing, and reformers yearn to extend it to non-charter governments.

Enter **Senate Bill 1107**, which purports to amend California’s Political Reform Act, overturn Proposition 73, and allow non-charter local governments and the state itself to implement public campaign finance if they wish.

California’s Political Reform Act, backed by Jerry Brown as he ran for governor in 1974, can be amended by the Legislature to further its purposes. However, the Legislature’s own lawyer concluded that since voters enacted the flat ban on public finance, they would have to repeal it. ... SB 1107 was passed last year and signed by Brown, 42 years after he sponsored the original Political Reform Act. The issue – whether the Legislature can overturn a voter-enacted public financing ban – is headed to the courts.

Last month, the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association and Quentin Kopp, a former state senator and judge who was one of Proposition 73’s original sponsors, sued to invalidate the new law. There are three intertwined issues.

- One is whether public financing is the cure for systemic political corruption its advocates fervently believe. ...
- Second is whether all local governments should be allowed to experiment with it, rather than just those with charters. ...
- Third, and most important, is whether the Legislature should be able to overturn something voters enacted. ... ★

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 \$65.00 for individuals and \$90.00 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 11:45 am every third Tuesday of the month—September through June—at Sa Très Bien, 699 W. Center St. in Visalia.

<http://tularecounty.ca.levnet.org>