



## **July 2023 VOTER Newsletter**

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## **PRESIDENT'S LETTER**



Dear Members,

It was truly my honor to have been voted at the annual meeting on June 10, 2023 as our League's new president for the year 2023-2024. I am totally humbled by your trust. I promise that I will try my best to serve you all and the League.

I would like first to give a BIG "Thank you" to Sophia Kao, our League president for 2021 through 2023. A job very well done. (By the way, she and I are not running a "Kao" dynasty. We just happen to be sharing the same last name.)

The League has been very well served by many previous presidents and volunteer members like yourselves, so in beginning to serve I have mixed fear and confidence emotions.

I have fears because I have to step in such big shoes from you, and literally I might have the smallest size feet to dare walking with these shoes. But, I also feel comfortable taking on this position and its responsibility, because I know you all will share with me your experience, wisdom, time and energy and I have all your backs to support me.

Working together, we can sustain the glory of LWV from the past 103 years and counting, we can also add new values to the League with fresh ideas, renewal of enthusiasm and ever-evolving technologies.

For the coming year, we will continue to work on our signature programs, such as water, ballot measure Pros & Cons, candidates forum, voter registration, voting rights protection, and monitoring our finances, now that we are fully established as a 501(c)3 organization.

We will also work on some new programs, such as learning how AI may affect our lives; exploring possibilities of bringing people together from the divided political communities; studying how we choose the judges in our judicial system; and what tools could help ease our digital lives.

We will be busy! But let's not forget to have some fun too, and I know Julie Reynolds Grabbe has a lot of ideas for bonding us more closely. So, please look out for her event announcements.

In addition to being committed and passionate in what we do at the League, we are also a group of people who care deeply about others. As we know, there are members who are struggling with physical, emotional and memory health declines, and there are members who are facing financial difficulties. So, please let's remember to check in

with one another from time to time, and provide help and support where and when they are needed.

I look forward to hearing from you, meeting and working in person with you. Please contact me whenever you have something on your mind about our League or about our programs.

Thank you and have a great summer!

**Aileen Kao,**

LWV-SWSCV president, 2023-2024

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## 2023 ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

Dear League Members and Friends,

I am delighted to provide you with a summary of our Annual Membership Meeting. After a three-year pause due to the pandemic, we were finally able to host this year's Annual Meeting in person again on June 10 at the Florentine Trattoria restaurant in Saratoga. This long-awaited event was truly memorable, with 28 attendees, including our dedicated League members and friends from the community.

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of this meeting, especially Vice President Eleanor Yick, Treasurer David Lee, and Secretary Frances Zhan. Together with the 2022-2023 board members, we presented updates on the League's activities and achievements in various areas such as Voter Services, Financial Status, Membership, Social Media/Websites, and the work of individual committees.

During the meeting, the board presented our League's goal for the next year, which had been discussed and proposed during the Program planning meeting. The goal aims to continue to enhance the League's visibility and impact within our community and proposes to establish a new committee "Embracing the Political Divide," along with two study groups: "Judicial Elections in CA" and "Emerging Issues Impacting Education." Linda Price and Liang Chao, the co-chairs of the new committee, presented a well-deliberated proposal that sparked enthusiastic discussions on potential topics and actionable steps for this group. Additionally, Rosario Dempsey and Eleanor Yick shared some ideas and initial plans for the two study groups. Both our League's goal for the next year and the new "Embracing the Political Divide" committee received approval during the meeting. If you are interested in joining these exciting new areas of work, please contact the leaders of these groups to get involved and contribute your ideas to these important initiatives.



***Newly Elected LWV-SWSCV 2023-2024 Board Members and Directors***

One of the highlights of the meeting was the announcement and approval of the new board for the 2023-2024 term. Our League will be led by President Aileen Kao, alongside a dynamic team of dedicated individuals. With their collective expertise and passion, I am confident that our League will continue to thrive and make a meaningful impact in the year ahead.

Furthermore, I have the pleasure of sharing the recipients of this year's prestigious Helga Ruby award. It is with great honor that we recognize Judy and Terry Zaccone for their dedication and contributions to advancing the objectives of our League. Their remarkable commitment has left a lasting impact and serves as an inspiration to us all. Please join me in congratulating Judy and Terry on this well-deserved recognition. Following the business meeting, we enjoyed a delightful lunch, providing us with an opportunity to connect and socialize. Additionally, we had the privilege of listening to a speech on "Election Security" delivered by Shannon Bushey from the Santa Clara County Registrar of Voters. The presentation shed light on important insights on the work of our local election office, sparking engaging questions and discussions among the attendees and our speaker. The Annual Meeting concluded successfully at around 2 pm, marking the end of this fiscal year of our League's work.

As my two-term tenure as president of our League comes to an end, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you for your unwavering support, dedication, and enthusiasm for our organization over the past two years. Your commitment has been instrumental in our success.

As we transition leadership to President Aileen Kao and the new board, I am filled with excitement and confidence in the continued growth and success of our League.

Together, we will continue to make meaningful impacts on our community.

Warm Regards,

**Sophia Kao,**

Outgoing President

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## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

We made it through another year. Thanks to your support, the LWV of Southwest Santa Clara was able to keep voters informed by hosting candidate forums for the 2022 elections. We also continued our tradition of presenting pros and cons on state ballot measures.

Your continued support gives us the opportunity to continue to educate and inform voters. We encourage you to take an active part in our work by volunteering to serve on a committee, helping with voter registration and education, and taking on tasks to keep our chapter running.

This is a gentle reminder that your annual membership renewal is now due for the fiscal year from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024. The membership fee is **\$80 for individual members** and **\$120 for households** when an additional member is included. Please plan to make your payment by **July 15, 2023**.

Membership dues can be paid online through our website at

<https://my.lwv.org/california/southwest-santa-clara-valley/join-or-renew#how-do-i-join>

To renew by check, make it out to **League of Women Voters of Southwest Santa Clara Valley** and mail it to:

LWV Southwest Santa Clara Valley

PO Box 2865

Saratoga, CA 95070

Your support and participation is vital to the existence of our chapter and the efforts in making democracy work. Your continued membership is greatly appreciated.

***Amy Vu, Membership Director***



**2023 LWVC CONVENTION REPORT**



### **Eleanor Yick, VP/Voter Services / Ellen Forbes, LWV Palo Alto:**

Four members of our League (Sophia Kao, Priya Shastri, Victoria Zhang and Eleanor Yick) attended LWVC's biennial convention held in San Francisco May 19-21, 2023. The 170 delegates present, representing 62 local Leagues, connected with colleagues from across the state and attended workshops and caucuses. At plenary sessions, we heard from informative speakers, such as, Cathy Darling Allen, County Clerk and Registrar of Voters in Shasta County, who led the way after her county supervisors canceled their contract with Dominion for voting machines and wanted ballots counted by hand!! After detailing the tremendous increase in costs due to additional staffing needed, another vendor was eventually selected. But, in the words of Jimmy Carter, she implored, "We have to 'adjust to changing times while staying true to...principles.'" We also heard from Cheryl Boudreau (UC Davis), who shared research on the relationship between trust and voting ( the League is known as a trusted source among voters) and from a panel that included Assemblymember Ash Kalra. Finally, we voted on priorities for 2023-25, and elected a new board.

**LWVC Executive Director Stephanie Doute** described the way in which she encourages us to approach our work. She quoted psychologist Tara Brach: "We are not the survival of the fittest. We are the survival of the nurtured." She urged us to lead with kindness and curiosity; to set out in every conversation to learn something, not teach it; and to listen to new people with wildly different perspectives.

**Voting Rights:** In 2020 and 2022 respectively, LWVC had worked hard to pass Assemblymember Ash Kalra's landmark CA Racial Justice Act and then its follow-up bill. By now, in mid-2023, the two bills have enabled 50,000 Californians to have their voting rights restored! Kalra and organizer/documentarian Thanh Tran described the transformative power of regaining suffrage: it not only empowers the individual (one prisoner quit his gang the day he got back his vote) but it also starts to heal the many families and communities that have been so negatively impacted by mass incarceration policies.

**New LWVC President Chris Carson** (LWVUS President 2016-2020) first acknowledged the incredible job the LWVC Board did adjusting to the pandemic and switching to an online platform so quickly and efficiently. Then she spoke about the many challenges our political process faces today, including the fact that certain government meetings are now being held in-person only, with no virtual comments

accepted, and that underserved communities are too often unaware of voting method options.

You can view presentation slides and handouts from the workshops and [caucuses](#) here as they become available. I highly recommend viewing the materials related to the workshop: Seizing the Narrative around Homelessness and Affordable Housing in CA and viewing the materials related to the caucuses: The Power to Act Locally on Criminal Justice Reform and Update on Healthcare, the new LWV Position and the CA Commission Report.

**Priya Shastri, Website/IT Director:**

The LWV convention from May 19-21, 2023, was an enriching first impression for me. I liked all the sessions that were lined up for the agenda. I attended two sessions on May 19 and one session each on May 20 and May 21. I teamed up with three other LWVSWSCV members and carpooled to the SF location. The car ride featured some valuable discussion on past efforts by the League.

The discussion on May 19 on how to run a grassroots organization provided some ideas on youth engagement to make the voters aware of their rights through the League. The efforts of the California state League were highlighted and the use of mailing lists was explained in detail. The presence of coaches for each of the Leagues and how to access them were described.

On May 20 there was an important discussion on immigrant populations and the challenges faced by immigrants crossing the border were highlighted. There was a knowledge session on the use of advocacy teams by the League to increase voter awareness.

There was a session on redistricting by California League president Chris Carson. She mentioned that redistricting is a humongous effort by the League to make sure each district has appropriate representation at all the levels.

The League provided awards to outstanding work performed by other Leagues. One of them was youth empowerment, engaging them using the game verifyit:

<https://playverifyit.org/>.

Overall, the session that was spread across two days helped build new connections and addressed how to seek help in migration of the website from Mylo to ClubExpress. I look forward to using my knowledge from the conference for helping complete the tasks of the LWVSWSCV agenda. The number of ideas provided at the conference can be used for all our activities!



## **VOTER SERVICES**



## **Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus**

Recently, LWVC forwarded to local Leagues a report from our partners at the Asian Law Caucus. It's based on their monitoring of polling places. The findings are all good to know, and the recommendations worthwhile for all of us to study — and then work to have implemented in our counties.

The email from the Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus stated that their ALC poll monitoring report, [Voices of Democracy: Voting Access in California's November 2022 Elections](#), has been published.

“In total, we had over 150 poll monitors visit 441 voting sites in 16 counties—nearly a third of all voting sites in the Bay Area and Central Valley. The report summarizes our volunteers' observations at the polls, including strengths and areas for improvement. We've presented these findings to the California Secretary of State's team as well as election advocates and civil rights groups. In addition, we sent detailed feedback reports to each county's election office. Many counties are already making adjustments based on the feedback, such as by improving poll worker training, investing in better signage, and finding more accessible polling places for the next election.”

All League members are encouraged to read this report, particularly those who engage in election day voting activities.

## **LWVUS Develops New Member Policy**

Over the past year, the LWVUS Governance Committee has been developing a [Member Rights & Responsibilities Policy](#) that defines what it means to be a League member. This past April, the LWVUS Board approved the final policy at their spring meeting, officially putting it in place. So, what does this mean for you?

It means that our organization now has a written definition of what you already do as a member of the League of Women Voters. A policy like this is standard in a federated nonprofit organization like the League. As a member, you aren't required to sign anything or change what you do with the League. This just helps to define our shared understanding of what League membership means.

This policy was developed through many years of research, legal review, professional consultation, and LWV member input. You are welcome to read the policy and the accompanying explanatory documents on the League Management Site. Thank you for your dedication to empowering voters and defending democracy with the League of Women Voters. We are a strong and impactful organization because of you!

- LWVUS



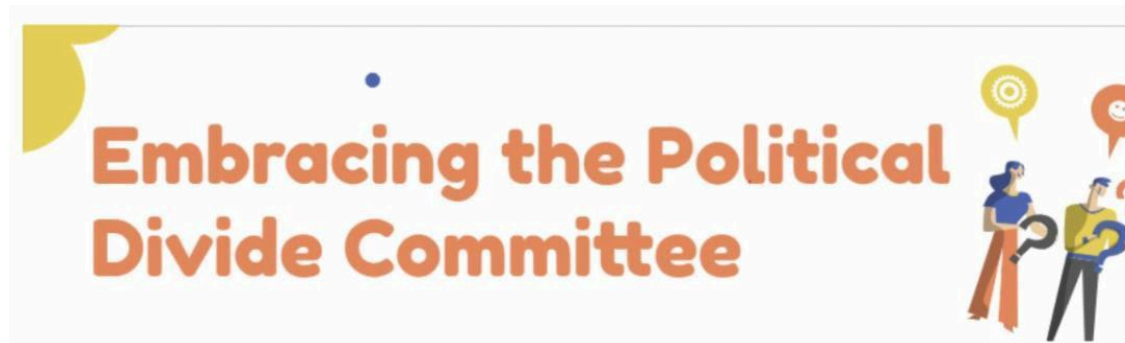
### **New LWV Legal Resources Program**

The League of Women Voters of the United States is thrilled to announce the launch of its new Legal Center on the organization's website, [LWV.org](http://LWV.org). The center showcases the League's legal work in federal courts from across the country. More information [here](#).

***Eleanor Yick/VP Voter Services***

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## **EMBRACING THE POLITICAL DIVIDE**



At the 2023 Annual Meeting, the Embracing the Divide Committee [presented the plan](#) to host quarterly discussions; it was approved by the members. There was a lot of interest in this new format to engage members. The first discussion topic will be on immigration. We will collaborate to provide articles and expert opinions from multiple perspectives. Check the [Committee Page](#) for updates.



**Embracing the Political Divide Committee** The July –Sep Q

**How is immigration affecting the citizens of the US?**

**Subtopics:**

- Legal vs. Illegal Immigration
- Open Borders
- Sanctuary cities/states
- Budget Requirements
- Expectations
- Benefits/Entitlements
- Assimilation into our culture

If you would like more information and/or be a part of this committee, please contact  
Co-Chairs: Linda Price, [lindaprice.ca@gmail.com](mailto:lindaprice.ca@gmail.com), 415.377.6666; or  
Liang Chao, [LFCHAO@gmail.com](mailto:LFCHAO@gmail.com), 408.218.7125

We will continue our planning meetings over dinner. Join us in the next committee meeting.

**Embracing the Divide Committee Second Planning Meeting (In Person)**

Date/Time: Thursday, July 27 at 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, August 22 at 6:00 p.m.

Location: TBD

Sign up by email: Liang Chao [LFCHAO@gmail.com](mailto:LFCHAO@gmail.com) and Linda Price

[LindaPrice.CA@gmail.com](mailto:LindaPrice.CA@gmail.com)

**Have a Socratic Dialogue with an AI Chatbot.**

Have you heard about the buzz about the latest chatbots with Artificial Intelligence?

ChatGPT by OpenAI, Bing Chat, Bard by Google and a few others. I gave ChatGPT a try with Socratic dialogues on the issue of open borders:

- [The conversation between Alice and Bob](#): “Act as a college professor Alice who is good at helping students explore different perspectives of an issue to gain more understanding of a complex issue. Student Bob supports open borders and supports humane treatment of migrants. Create a dialogue between Alice and Bob.”
- [The conversation between Claire and Bob](#): “Act as a college professor Claire who is good at helping students explore different perspectives of an issue to gain more understanding of a complex issue. Student David supports a border wall and the impact on public safety for residents. Create a dialogue between Claire and David “

Anyone can sign up for free to [give it a try with ChatGPT](#) or [Bing Chat](#). Share your conversations with us at our Google group

<[lvswscv-embracing-divide@googlegroups.com](mailto:lvswscv-embracing-divide@googlegroups.com)>

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**NATURAL RESOURCES - WATER**



**Food Waste—major carbon emitter:**

The Food, Soils, and Agriculture Team of the LWVUS Climate Interest Group has prepared a [Food Waste Toolkit](#). Food waste is a major contributor to carbon emissions, which increase the severity of climate change. Leagues and others can act locally to reduce food waste. Check out the blog [Food Waste -- Why It Matters and What You Can Do](#) and the Climate Interest Group's [website](#).

For a bi-weekly update on overall League work, [sign up for the League Update Newsletter](#).

**Why tiered water rates? Important tool for conservation and equity.** With climate change [intensifying](#) California's water supply booms and busts, dwindling water supplies have led to a substantial increase in the retail cost of water over the last decade. Drought-induced water shortages [cause water agencies](#) to invest in additional supplies or enact expensive emergency measures. These costs are often passed on to households through increased rates and surcharges and fall disproportionately on low-income Californians, many of whom have seen their incomes stagnate. Meanwhile, high-income households [generally consume more](#) water than low-income households. Unfortunately, tiered water rates in California—that could address this problem—[have been and](#) continue to be challenged under [Proposition 218](#), a California constitutional amendment passed in 1996. Read more at <https://legal-planet.org/2023/06/23/ucla-clinic-submits-amicus-brief-in-water-rate-design-case/>.

***Meg Giberson, Natural Resources-Water director***



## **MEET OUR MEMBERS**



**Priya Shastri** is an Indian American who came to the US in 2001 to pursue her Masters in Computer science from Virginia Tech, graduated in 2003. She holds a Bachelors in Computer Engineering degree from University of Mumbai and graduated in 2001. She moved to work in the Bay area at Sun Microsystems in Sept. 2004. Since then, with the exception of one year 2005, she has been in the US and worked as Software Engineering Test Lead at several tech companies including Sun Microsystems, Oracle, Intel, VMWare and most recently at Couchbase, Inc., based out of Santa Clara CA. Over the years she has gained certifications in Project Management, Six Sigma Quality Engineer, tech stack like Kubernetes and most recently in AWS Cloud. She has also been a Toastmaster since 2020 and is currently a Division Director for District 101 (home to 153 clubs), which runs from San Francisco to Santa Cruz.

Her parents are Indian and reside in India. She lives in the Bay Area with her husband and two boys who are in high school and middle school respectively. She heard of the League of Women Voters in 2022 and became a member in 2023. She plans to utilize her tech skills in revamping and beautifying the LWV-SWSCV website effectively. With her knowledge in the tech domain, she aims to help the League achieve its digitization goals.

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## CITY NEWS & UPDATES

### Campbell City Council

**May:** In light of Governor Newsom's recent highlighting of the continuous effort to "Make Water Conservation a Way of Life" and in keeping with both Valley Water and San Jose Water Company (SJWC) conservation policies, staff is recommending that the City rescind the Stage 3 drought measures and enact Stage 1. Stage 1 potable water use restrictions include:

- No watering between 10:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.; and irrigation cannot exceed fifteen minutes in any landscape zone on any parcel;
- Residents must fix leaks, broken irrigation systems, or broken fixtures within five business days, if notified to do so by SJWC;
- Operation of decorative fountains, or the filling or topping-off of decorative lakes or ponds is prohibited, except for maintenance purposes, and fountains, lakes, or ponds that utilize recycled (recirculated) water;
- Restaurant water service is prohibited except upon request;
- Hotels and motels must provide guests with the option of not having towels and linens laundered daily and promptly display notice of this option; and
- No irrigation shall occur for forty-eight hours after measurable rainfall of one-quarter of an inch or more.

**June:** Council approved a one-year consultant services agreement with HouseKeys, Inc. to serve as the city's Below-Market Rate Program Administrator. The city has worked with this group on housing since 2016. The city also has hired a full time Housing Coordinator.

Council received the Housing Program Audit and authorized the city manager to apply for, negotiate, and execute a Capacity Building Grant with Destination: Home for an Unhoused Specialist position.

*Jackie Costanzo, Campbell Observer*

### Los Gatos Town Council

**May:** The Town announced that it was renewing an agreement with the Los Gatos Chamber of Commerce to continue operating the Los Gatos Visitors Information Center. Council members approved paying \$88K to the Chamber as it adds "destination marketing" to its services in the upcoming fiscal year. The expanded service will include the development of a Visit Los Gatos website and related social media pages. The goal is to increase the Town's revenue by increasing tourism.

The Town Council reviewed the proposed Operating Budget and Capital Budget recommendations for the upcoming fiscal year, 7/1/2023 – 6/30/2024. These recommendations were provided by the Finance Commission, the Finance Director, the Parks and Public Works Director, and the Town Manager. Council members chose to fund the development of more Emergency Operations Centers, part of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program. They asked staff to complete action on the Lynne Ave. Sidewalk Project, a safety measure for Union Middle School students. The Parks and Public Works department reported they have 64 multi-year Capital Improvement projects in various stages of development. They agreed with the Council's request to prepare a comprehensive report on the progress and financial commitments of each of these to date.

**June:** Residents recently expressed concern, in public hearings and emails, about vehicular speeding, multiple crashes, and two resulting fatalities on Blossom Hill Road between Union Ave and Camden Ave. The Town Manager is working with the City of San Jose in applying for a grant from Safe Streets and Roads for All, a federal Department of Transportation program, to fund a Corridor Study. Council members approved additional Town funding for the study by an expert transportation consultant firm.

Three faith-based charitable groups