



The Voter

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF MENDOCINO COUNTY

October, 2018

Cindy Plank and Nancy Kleiber, Presidents

Jary Stavely and Lee Tepper, Editors

This month's meeting ...

League to Hold Public Meetings on Ballot Measures

by Carol Czadek

The League will discuss the eleven state propositions on the November ballot, as well as Fort Bragg's Measure H, at twin meetings to be held on Tuesday, October 9 at the Caspar Community Center. The times will be 10 AM and 6 PM. Voter Services Chair Carol Czadek has assembled an impressive lineup of presenters to discuss the pros and cons of each measure. Although each presenter may not be at both meetings, the material presented will be the same. Those who attend in the morning should expect to hear the same information as the evening, and vice versa.



As usual, the morning meeting will begin at 10:00, following a time of coffee and conversation beginning at 9:30. Doors will open at 5:45 for the evening meeting. Bring a friend or neighbor

and help the League promote informed voting.

The lineup for the discussion is as follows:

- Proposition 1—housing assistance bonds—Carol Czadek
- Proposition 2—mental illness program bonds—Babs Levine
- Prop. 3—water issues bonds—Nancy Kleiber
- Proposition 4—children's hospital bonds—Sharon Gilligan
- Proposition 5—tax base changes for replacement properties—Pat Dunbar
- Proposition 6—reversal of legislature's fuel tax increase—Jane Person
- Proposition 7—daylight savings time alignment—Meg Courtney (AM only)
- Proposition 8—regulation of charges for kidney dialysis—Dorine Real
- Proposition 10—rent control expansion—Barbara Auerbach (AM only)
- Proposition 11—ambulance personnel break regulation—Charlene McAllister
- Proposition 12—confinement of farm animals—Linda Jupiter (AM only)
- Measure H—sales tax increase for city's pension costs—Pat Dunbar

If you have an interest in a particular Proposition and would like to partner with the person on the list, please contact Carol Czadek at 964-9271, or email to norcoel@mcn.org.

LWV Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, strives to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

President's message ...

Direct Democracy

By Nancy Kleiber

Lots of talk these days about threats (both internal and external) to our democracy and democratic institutions, with the fear that the country is veering toward authoritarianism. But alarmist phrases like "threats to..." and "veering toward..." imply that we already are that "shining city upon a hill," that "pinnacle of democracy" of the ideal. Has our system of government ever been a true democracy? No, nor was it envisioned as such.

Founded as a constitutional republic, the U.S. has inched back and forth between the poles of direct and indirect government. Direct government is touted by its supporters as true democracy, and by its critics as a tyranny of the majority, or 'mobocracy.' Indirect government is lauded for protecting the rights of the minority, while being lambasted as oligarchic. The constant push and pull between the poles is expressed in constitutional arguments: executive vs. legislative vs. judicial powers vs. states rights vs. rights of the individual. The *realpolitik* comes from extra-constitutional forces (not recognized nor envisioned in the Constitution): the political parties, the media, lobbies for business, churches, unions, non-profits and other special interests (including foreign—so long as they register).



"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty; power is ever stealing from the many to the few. The manna of popular liberty must be gathered each day or it is rotten. The living sap of today outgrows the dead rind of yesterday. The hand entrusted with power becomes, either from human depravity or *esprit de corps*, the necessary enemy of the people. Only by continued oversight can the democrat in office be prevented from hardening into a despot; only by unintermitted agitation can a people be sufficiently awake to principle not to let liberty be smothered in material prosperity."

— Wendell Phillips, January 28, 1852, in a speech to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society

One has only to look at the premise of 'one man-one vote' to see how that early American concept has morphed over nearly two centuries from 'one propertied, white male—' to 'one citizen—one vote.' Those incremental changes have not been without struggle or sacrifice: ask the suffragettes who endured prison, beatings and forced feedings, or the families of the civil rights workers Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner. The most recent chapter in this never-ending saga is the battle over election of the President by popular vote or by the Electoral College.

During this program year, the League of Women Voters of Mendocino County is focusing on three areas: Environment, Democracy, and Organization Building. As part of our Democracy focus, we would like to promote a discussion on how it's working and how it's changed over time. In our September issue, we provided an update on voting rights cases in the courts. On the next page, in preparation for our October program on the November ballot propositions, we've included an article on Initiatives and Referendums. Above all else, remember the goal: *We Voters Rule!*

California League's Recommendations

League recommendations will not be part of our Pros & Cons presentations, but readers may want to know what the State League's board has determined, based on State and national positions. LWVC recommends:

YES: 1, 2, and 10

NO: 3, 4, 5, and 6

No position: 7, 8, 11, and 12

Read the reasoning at <https://lwvc.org/vote/elections/ballot-recommendations>.

The Initiative and Referendum Processes

by Nancy Kleiber

The referendum is a mechanism to get a statute or constitutional amendment onto the ballot for voter approval. Generally this process is reserved for use by the state legislature. All 50 states have a referendum process. However, there is no national referendum process—either advisory or compulsory. So unlike Great Britain, we won't be having a Brexit-type vote to leave NAFTA or NATO, nor a referendum on Building the Wall.

The initiative, on the other hand, is a mechanism for citizens to bypass the legislature to propose statutes, or in some cases state constitutional amendments, on the ballot. It is a form of direct democracy and has been enacted in 24 of the 50 states. In some of those states, the legislature may also refer a statute or amendment to the ballot. Historically, initiatives have been utilized since the late 1700's, but the first recorded statewide initiative was in South Dakota in 1898. The last state to adopt the initiative was Rhode Island in 1996. Closer to home, California adopted the initiative in 1911 during a wave of progressive reforms sweeping the country.

Generally there are six steps to the initiative process:

1. File a preliminary measure with a designated state agent.
2. Review the proposed measure to insure conformance with existing statutes (in some cases this includes review of the actual language)
3. Prepare the ballot title and summary
4. Circulate petitions to acquire the required number of signatures
5. Submit the petitions to designated officials for verification
6. If qualifications are met, put the measure on the ballot. It usually requires majority approval, unless it's a revenue measure.

While seemingly straightforward, each one of these steps can be the subject of both administrative and judicial battles. Witness the ongoing controversy in North Carolina over step 3—the wording of the ballot title and summary—of two constitutional amendments regarding appointments to the judicial branch and the state board of elections.

Since 1911, California has been a top user of the initiative process. From 1991 through 2000, of the 389 Initiatives proposed nation-wide, 279 were in California.

The presence of initiatives on the ballot has increased voter turnout by 3 to 8%. But because of the often unintended (or unwanted) consequences of statutes adopted directly by initiative, there have been numerous reforms to the process itself. For example, to cover the cost of processing initiatives, California set a filing fee of \$200 in 1943. That remained in effect until 2015, when it was raised to \$2000. Again, to broaden access to the initiative process, it was expanded in 1960 to allow initiatives on both the November general election ballot and the June primary ballot. After 51 years, second thoughts prevailing, initiatives were restricted to the November ballot only.

While the percentage of valid signatures required to qualify an initiative has not increased (5% of the last gubernatorial general election votes cast for general statutes, 8% for constitutional amendments and revenue measures), the absolute number has increased dramatically as California's population has grown, and with it, the cost of sponsoring an initiative. To secure a place on the ballot is now the "right" of very wealthy individuals (e.g. 2016's Prop 60), big business groups (e.g. 2016's Prop 65), or broad-based community coalitions (e.g. 2020's Schools & Communities First initiative).

In this great experiment that is our democracy, the initiative & referendum process is one of the most potent elements. The League of Women Voters has always been an advocate for including this chemical in the political formula, but recognizes that I&R can be hijacked by special interest groups. To learn more about the League's position, visit <https://lwvc.org/position/initiative-and-referendum>.

Coming up in just a month, on November 6, 2018, there will be 11 statewide propositions for us to decide (including 3 legislature referrals and 8 citizen initiatives) plus one local ballot measure. Please join us on October 9 at the Caspar Community Center at either 10 AM or 6 PM for a spirited discussion of these propositions.

September meeting

Climate Change Is Everybody's Business

by Becky Bowen

Climate Change: Is it Really Such a Big Deal? Dr. Linda Dismore Swift put this question to over forty League members and local citizens during the two September 18 meetings at the Caspar Community Center.

The answer is yes.

Dr. Dismore, a geologist, turned to research on climate change after her retirement from Chevron Corporation, where she worked for 30 years in mineral, oil, and gas exploration and production.

The “Big Deal” is warming of Earth by greenhouse gases that has changed weather patterns, caused agricultural failure, upset migrations of people and animals, moved many species of plants and animals toward extinction, and impacted military defense operations. The economic impact of global warming has changed the life of every person on earth—all 7.7 billion of us with a growth rate of some 83 million people a year, according to one source.

Scientific evidence of climate change is conclusive, and we have moved past the stage of denial to transition to renewable energy use. The future is a low-carbon future, she said. This reality is embraced in environmental positions of the League. Dr. Dismore is director of the state League’s Climate Change Program. (She can be reached at climatechange@lww.org.)

There is a lot of work to do. Scientific evidence confirms permafrost melt, Arctic and Antarctic glacier and ice shelf melt, drought, catastrophic flooding, sea level rise, and devastating wildfires and storms that cost some \$360 billion in damage in 2017 alone. The evidence points to human cause, primarily by our use of fossil fuels.

Here’s what humans can do, Dr. Dismore says:

- Adapt to a reduced carbon environment by using efficient renewable energy sources (no coal) for our transportation and in our construction.
- Put a price on carbon by requiring a carbon tax and implementing cap and trade.

“California is doing this and it’s working. There is money to be made in energy transitions,” she said. The California League has endorsed an informational website established by Dr. Dismore:

<https://priceoncarbon.org>.

She encouraged league members to initiate community action to reduce carbon emissions at the local level, such as supporting county and city government efforts to practice carbon sequestration on natural and working lands, a practice which includes reforestation and sustainable agriculture practices (and will be the subject of our January meeting). A good place to learn about natural and working lands is the California Air Resources Board website: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/>. Other resources for introducing climate change into local action are at: <https://lwvc.org/issues/climate-change>.



Dr. “Diz” Dismore and Gloria Chun Hoo, flanked by local League co-presidents Cindy Plank and Nancy Kleiber

Dr. Dismore was joined at the meetings by Gloria Chun Hoo, a member of the LWVCA board of directors and Council Chair of the Leagues of Women Voters of Santa Clara (made up of five leagues in that county). Ms. Hoo led a discussion of community outreach and education about climate change.



Our League has acquired special yard signs which encourage voting. They have messages on both sides, as shown. They will be posted at various businesses and public sites on the coast, including the Senior Center and the Mendocino Sports Club. If you would like one for your property, or know of a likely spot for one, contact Nancy Kleiber. Signs must be taken down by November 11, five days after the election.

Expiration Date

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), key to the efforts of our local and national Land Trusts (see May '17 *Voter*), was set to expire on September 30. We think readers may be interested in the following article, found on line at Truthout.

By [Tara Lohan, The Revelator](#), published September 22, 2018:

Time is running out for one of the United States' most successful — and least-known — conservation programs. Virtually every county in the United States has benefited from the [Land and Water Conservation Fund](#), signed into law in 1964 with the goal of protecting natural areas and cultural resources and increasing recreational opportunities. In its more than 50-year history, the fund has helped 42,000 projects across the country, ranging from wilderness areas and historic battlefields to local tennis courts and trails.

“It’s an amazingly unknown program for all that it has accomplished,” says Kathy DeCoster, director of federal affairs at the [Trust for Public Land](#), a nonprofit that helps acquire and protect natural spaces.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund was originally authorized for 25 years and then extended another 25 years. When expiration loomed again in

September 2015, Congress gave it a short three-year extension, which is now about to expire. If legislators fail to reauthorize the program before September 30, the fund will immediately run dry and will no longer be able to dole out money, which in recent years has averaged about \$450 million annually.

Proponents of the fund like to highlight that it does not rely on taxpayer dollars. Virtually all of the money for the fund comes from revenue generated by offshore oil and gas leases on the Outer Continental Shelf. A small fraction of the money comes from a tax on motorboat fuel and sales of surplus federal property.

“It’s a balance, if you will,” says DeCoster, “an asset-for-asset arrangement when you deplete one natural resource, then take some of those revenues and make sure the American people get something permanent back from that.”

But if the fund isn’t reauthorized and that dedicated source of funding is no longer available, it could have both ecological and economic impacts affecting local, state and national parks, as well the outdoor industry, an economic driver in many communities.

The complete article can be found at <https://therevelator.org/lose-best-conservation-program/>.

What the League Said

(The VOTER staff thinks it is worth reviewing what our national office said about the qualifications of Brett Kavanaugh before the recent uproar about his behavior during adolescence and undergraduate days. These are the LWVUS's reflections on the Kavanaugh hearings on September 13. – eds.)

Since its founding in 1920, the League's core values aim to empower voters and expand participation in our democracy through public education and advocacy throughout the nation. We believe that we must challenge the discriminatory laws in our country and build a system that allows all citizens to have an equal voice. We fight for a representative government because protecting the right to vote is indivisibly part of the League of Women Voters' basic purpose.

Today, our core work focuses on voter engagement, protecting voters' rights, improving elections, campaign finance/money in politics, and redistricting. We are leaders in this space through the many decades of work by the League's dedicated service at the local, state, and federal levels of government and throughout communities nationwide.

The League does not take a position on appointees and we don't dispute an appointee's qualifications. Our steady focus is on public policies—namely, the decision-making process, enforcement, and the relevant administrative rules. Yet, we are advocates and we fiercely understand the importance of our role as advocates for nearly a century.

And, while we do not take a position on appointees, we are obliged to stand up when and if ideologies—spoken or implied—threaten the people, the rights and the public policies the League has long worked on to protect and expand fundamental voting rights.

With that framework laid, it is critical to share how our work and legacy measures up against the ideology of the next Supreme Court Justice. After three days of hearings, this is what we've learned about Judge Kavanaugh's record as it relates to our priority issues.

Judge Kavanaugh has not demonstrated a commitment to protect voters:

The League believes that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed. The fight to protect voters' rights, especially those whose voices are least heard—specifically communities of color—is ongoing and fierce.

Judge Kavanaugh's voting rights record causes some concern and we need clarification around how he will handle important voting rights protections and whether those protections are at risk of being further eroded.

In *South Carolina v. United States*, Judge Kavanaugh precleared a voter photo identification law, after the Department of Justice deemed it a threat to the voting rights of tens of thousands of minority voters in the state. The separate concurrence by Judge Bates, in that same decision, is significant because it shows a clear distinction between the two judges with similar worldviews of precedent and the historic importance of not only section 5 but the Voting Rights Act generally. Ultimately, it shows that regardless of which side of the political aisle a judge sits, the ability to leave precedent undisturbed is the standard unless a compelling reason exists.

Secondly, the case of *Rice v. Cayetano* has also come up. In *Rice*, an amicus brief by Judge Kavanaugh was filed that was co-authored with Robert Bork and Roger Clegg. In this brief, they argued that Hawaii violated the Constitution by permitting only Native Hawaiians to vote in elections for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, a state agency charged with working for the betterment of Native Hawaiians. However, Justice Stevens wrote a compelling dissent asserting, "there is simply no invidious discrimination present in this effort to see that indigenous peoples are compensated for past wrongs, and to preserve a distinct and vibrant culture that is as much a part of this Nation's heritage as any." Judge Kavanaugh's record in these voting rights cases raises red flags about how he might rule from the highest court in future decisions.

The late release of the SCOTUS nominee's full record undermines much needed public transparency: *The League has long worked for the citizen's right to know and for broad citizen participation in government. We further believe that the government bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving*

adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.

As an organization that promotes and reveres transparency, the current Supreme Court nominee process has been unusually opaque to the public. Senate Judiciary Committee hearings were scheduled before obtaining the nominee's full record, and over 42,000 records were released just hours before the first hearing. The proximity of the documents' release to the hearings does not pass the transparency sniff test. When a full record of a SCOTUS nominee is not available, the public, and those officials elected to represent us, are at a disadvantage and cannot capably assess whether the nominee reflects American democracy.

Judge Kavanaugh's record shows a consistent refusal to uphold campaign finance restrictions: *The League believes that the methods of financing political campaigns should enhance political equality for all citizens, ensure maximum participation by citizens in the political process while protecting representative democracy from being distorted by big spending in election campaigns. We are fighting to reform money in politics in Congress, with state legislatures, with the executive branch, and, where appropriate, the courts. Without further inform, Judge Kavanaugh's level of concern for the influence of money in politics runs counter to the League's principles.*

In the campaign finance case of *Emily's List v. Federal Election Commission*, Judge Kavanaugh reversed a lower court's opinion that enacted regulations to limit an influx of spending from outside groups to nonprofits. He held that contributions and expenditures constituted speech, and thus are afforded First Amendment protection. This decision laid the groundwork for the holding in the landmark *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* case, giving corporations the ability to spend unlimited sums in political campaigns.

Similarly, in *Independence Institute v. Federal Election Commission*, he wrote the opinion for two-panel members utilizing what Demos and Campaign Legal Center deemed "a novel theory that would limit disclosure based on a spender's tax-status, a theory subsequently rejected by a three-judge court and the Supreme Court."

It goes without saying that the Supreme Court plays a critical role in protecting the rights of voters in this country. While we won't assess the qualifications of the Supreme Court nominee, we exercise our obligation to diligently review Judge Kavanaugh's record and the testimony made before the Senate Judiciary Committee to determine how this appointment could impact the fundamental values that the League of Women Voters of the United States works to protect and enhance, now and for decades to come.

... and what we're saying now

(This is the September 28 Statement from U.S. League – eds.)

The Senate Judiciary Committee's hearing was an appalling display of inequity for women's voices. For far too long, American women and girls have been told to keep quiet after enduring sexual assault. In 2018, the time has come to stop telling women to "sit down and shut up."

Contact your Senators today and demand a full FBI investigation into all allegations of sexual misconduct before a vote on the Senate floor to appoint the next U.S. Supreme Court Justice. Throughout the hearing, Dr. Christine Blasey Ford's powerful testimony resonated with women across the country. She was a cooperative, compelling, and composed witness. Dr. Ford acted to protect future generations of women and girls whose everyday lives will be shaped by decisions of the next Supreme Court Justice.

Stand with the League and demand a full FBI investigation into all allegations of sexual misconduct before the Senate votes on Brett Kavanaugh. We will no longer let our voices be silenced to protect the same entrenched power that has worked to disenfranchise women throughout the course of our country's history.

Contact your Senators today and demand a full FBI investigation into all allegations of sexual misconduct before the Senate votes on this nomination. The link for action can be found at http://participate.lwv.org/c/10065/p/dia/action4/common/public/?action_KEY=13492&utm_source=ActionAlert&utm_medium=email.

News from Our National Office

The Arizona League is participating in a lawsuit, *Promise Arizona vs. Michele Reagan*, which challenges the state of Arizona's practice of purging voters. The lawsuit details how Arizona has continued to engage in known violations of the NVRA. The lawsuit is intended to protect voters who have moved since last election due to work, school, family, or any other reason, and ensure they will not be turned away from the polls.

The LWVUS Climate Change Task Force has put together guidance for Leagues and individuals wishing to comment on the roll back of the fuel economy standards for cars and light trucks, otherwise known as the Clean Cars Standard. Notice of the roll back was published in the federal register and comments are now being accepted. Please comment on behalf of your state or local League or as an individual regarding this misguided decision by the administration.

http://participate.lwv.org/c/9217/p/salsa/web/commo n/public/content?content_item_KEY=3766

The League sent a memo to the U.S. House regarding the citizenship question on the U.S. Census. The memo urges the House to use its oversight authority to remove the question from the 2020 Census, while outlining the irreversible harm that the inclusion of this question will cause for communities across the country. Members of the LWVUS Lobby Corps will be visiting House offices on this topic.

H.R. 5308, legislation that proposes a series of quarters, featuring a 19th Amendment icon on one side and a noteworthy woman from each state and territory on the other, has been introduced in the U.S. House by Rep. Barbara Lee. LWVUS supports contacting your representative in support of this bill.

LWV Missouri had a big win last week in two climate change cases! The court ruled that Amendment 1, an amendment to the state constitution, would remain on the ballot. The measure is aimed at increasing fairness, integrity, transparency, and accountability in the state legislature. Congratulations to the Missouri League for all their hard work and dedication to this effort.

LWVMC Schedule of Programs

The League of Women Voters of Mendocino County is planning to hold the following general meetings during the next eight months. Several of them, scheduled during daylight savings time, will be held both in the morning and again in the evening, in order to accommodate work and childcare conflicts. All take place on Tuesdays at the Caspar Community Center, with the exception of the traditional Friday evening Meet & Greet in March.

Members are also welcome to attend Board meetings, held at the Fort Bragg Library at 9:30, generally on the final Tuesday of the month. Check our website (mendo.ca.lwv.org/) for changes.

2018

October 9, 10 AM & 6 PM:

"Pros & Cons of November Ballot Measures"

presented by various League members

contact: Carol Czadek

November 13, 6 PM only:

"League Transformation Roadmap"

presented by LWVC President Helen Hutchinson
& Melissa Breach

2019

January 8, 6 PM only:

"Carbon Sequestration/Local Farming"

presented by Elizabeth Guimarin & local farmers

contact: Carol Czadek

February 12, 10 AM only:

"State/Local Positions & Program Planning"

presented by LWVMC members

contact: Nancy Kleiber

March 15, 5 PM:

"Meet & Greet Your Local Officials"

contact: Jary Stavely

April 9: "The Future Mill Site Wetlands"

presented by the League's Mill Site Committee

contact: George Reinhardt

May 14, 10 AM only:

Annual Meeting/Luncheon/Election of Officers

contact: Cindy Plank

Fort Bragg City Council Candidate Forum

by Sharon Gilligan

The League forum at Town Hall for Fort Bragg City Council candidates on September 21 drew a standing-room-only crowd, which came prepared with many pointed questions on growth, operations, and the local environment, especially the mill site clean-up. Lindy Peters, the current mayor, is running for re-election for one of three open seats, along with Bobby Burns, Tess Albin-Smith, Jessica Morsell-Haye, Mary Rose Kaczorowski, Dana Jess, and Ruben Alcalá. The crowd was intense and respectful, and the candidates were concise and professional in their responses.

An early question asked if anyone had contracts with the city which might create a conflict of interest. None of the candidates had such contracts.

When candidates were asked their position on rent control, Peters said trying to control property owners' rights usually backfires and believes the answer is to get more housing built. Most of the other candidates were also reluctant to impose more restraints on personal property, and thought increasing the volume of available housing was a better solution. The exception was Bobby Burns who did favor some form of rent control. When questioned on how they would increase affordable housing, Peters reminded the audience that no one can do it alone, and the task requires a team effort. He cited projects he has supported including Habitat for Humanity and expediting the building of secondary units. Morsell-Haye observed that the housing shortage covers not just low-cost housing but availability across the price spectrum, and noted that there is “money to be found” in the form of grants and partnering with private developers. Kaczorowski noted that the city has identified vacant lots that could be developed and urged coming together to define what affordable means. Jess brought up sweat equity programs and suggested the building of more apartment complexes. Albin-Smith also endorsed Habitat, sweat equity, and more mother-in-law units, but also urged parking areas, not just campsites, where people living in overnight trailers or even their cars could have access to toilets and running water. Burns had no specific goals but endorsed the need for more affordable housing and looking at different ways to accomplish that goal. Alcalá noted the cost of building granny

units was high and encouraged exploring how other cities addressed the problem.

Candidates were also asked about ocean stewardship, cannabis, tourism, and cleanup of the mill site. The September 27 Fort Bragg Advocate offers more quotes, and a full video of the event can be found at: http://cityfortbragg.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=11&clip_id=554.

Opinion

VYOB in the October Election

by Dorine Real

The majority of Mendocino County voters (83%) now vote by compulsory mail-in ballot. This is cheaper for the County and easier for voters than the old polling-booth method, but has problematic side-effects. One is that, for us, the “November election” has become the October election. To reach the voters before they mail their ballots, candidates and measure proponents must raise funds and develop and distribute their publicity in just a few weeks from the filing deadline, then make another big push in November to catch the attention of walk-in voters. The added expense and stress of this schedule may even keep some candidates out of the races. Statewide and national campaigns may not even bother to court early voters, which means early voters may miss advertising – and late-breaking news – that might have changed their votes.

More troubling is the loss of ballot privacy. The secret ballot used to be considered a cornerstone of democracy. For married women in particular it guaranteed immunity from pressure from their husbands to “not cancel my vote.” For working people, it protected against pressure from employers or unions. It upheld the separation of church and state. And the possibility that someone might actually pay money for votes was taken seriously. Democratic norms – a widespread agreement on what constitutes an outrage to democracy – seem to have protected us from this kind of abuse so far; but the outrageous is becoming normal. You the voter are on your own to defend the independence of your vote. Vote your own ballot! By all means discuss the candidates and measures, talk about how you *intend* to vote, but don't show anyone your actual ballot. And don't ask to see anyone's ballot, particularly your spouse's, son or daughter's, or employee's. This October, be an upholder of democracy.

Coastal Commission Meeting in Fort Bragg

by Jary Stavely

On September 12 the California Coastal Commission (CCC) met at Fort Bragg's Town Hall to begin a three day meeting which included two items of particular concern to people on the Mendocino Coast.

Additional information on these issues can be found at:

<https://www.pressdemocrat.com/news/8761883-181/albion-bridge-dispute-enters-new>;

<https://www.pressdemocrat.com/news/8736979-181/skunk-train-deal-for-bluff>

Mill Site Planning

During its recent convocation at Town Hall, the California Coastal Commission considered the city of Fort Bragg's request to be released from the currently required specific plan process for rezoning the G-P mill site (approved in 2012), and instead be allowed to follow a "community-based comprehensive planning process." City Planning Director Marie Jones related that Georgia-Pacific had withdrawn from the 2012 process, and that the city had begun a new process in 2017. Using input from a series of community meetings (see the October 2017 *Voter*), the city was pursuing a new plan, which could more easily be implemented on a piecemeal basis, instead of all at once, as the previous process, with the participation of G-P, had envisioned. She asked for the commission's approval of the new process, which would allow the considerable infrastructure which needs to be developed to be undertaken in smaller pieces.

According to Ms. Jones, the problems that need to be overcome on the 400-acre site include: the extensive area of asphalt and gravel currently covering the surface; the lack of water, sewer, and electricity over most of the area; the lack of streets to provide access; the inappropriate current zoning; the need for restoration of natural wetlands; and the need to preserve and develop cultural resources. In her remarks she stated that daylighting Alder and Maple Creeks was among the city's guiding principles for development. She also mentioned that the city council was interested in attracting new wood product facilities to the tract. The Commission's staff supported Ms. Jones' request.

A number of community members gave public input at the meeting. John Gallo the younger and William Lemos, of the Fort Bragg Headlands Consortium, supported the city's request, with the caution that the piecemeal approach could lead to sprawl and over-

development rather than the reduced scale and extra open space supported by community input. They urged the commission to continue the guidance toward conservation it had previously provided. Several others urged the commission to protect the future environment on the site from existing toxins in the remaining ponds; to preserve open space and recreation opportunities; and to protect the city's newly developed coastal trail.

The city's request was approved. Soon after the conclusion of the CCC meeting came the announcement of an agreement between Georgia-Pacific and the Skunk Train for the purchase of 70 acres of the mill site.

In a related development at the end of August, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) changed its position on the need to clean the toxins remaining at Pond 8 on the site. In a new letter to G-P, the DTSC mandated that it incorporate newly updated sea level guidance from the California Ocean Protection Council and California Coastal Commission; conduct additional sampling of pond sediments; and add 'hot spot removal' to the list of alternatives. This, in effect, reverses the DTSC's previous acquiescence to G-P's plan to leave the pond as it is.

A video of the mill site taken by drone, which Marie Jones showed the Commission, may be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avi7gW-CjMo>.

Albion Bridge Project

The Commission also considered Caltrans' request to conduct geotechnical surveys to evaluate the future of the Albion River bridge on Highway One. The proposal included drilling and taking geologic samples from several different areas adjacent to the bridge. A standing-room-only audience attended the hearing, which the CCC broadcast as audio on the

Guest House grounds and a video in the old rec center gym under City Hall. More than twenty local residents addressed the commission urging that they reject the proposal.

The preponderance of comments indicated distrust of the Caltrans proposal as paving the way for replacement, rather than the possible continuation, of the historic bridge. Many speakers mentioned a recently published article by two engineers with PhD credentials attesting to the structural integrity of the bridge. Opponents also suggested that the Commission did not have the legal authority to approve the proposal. They said an EIR was necessary before the geotechnical surveys were undertaken because the studies themselves would do harm to the community, due to:

- helicopter noise and dangerous cable maneuvering
- the obstruction of the highway,
- the destruction of a grove of eucalyptus trees adjacent to the cove,
- erosion caused by grading and the removal of vegetation,
- toxins which would be released into the area.

Peter Wells, co-owner of the Albion River Inn, pointed out that the CCC itself had promoted conservation of the existing village and its rural qualities during his own development request 37 years before, that he was happy with the results it had prescribed, and that he felt the Caltrans proposal violated the tenets the commission had stood for.

After the public comment period the Commission heard from Caltrans representative Frank Demling, who stressed that his organization has been fully involved with preserving the bridge, and described some of the extensive maintenance it has been doing. He assured the commissioners that the surveys were necessary for the preservation of the existing bridge, which had not been ruled out, as well as for considering alternatives for future traffic across the river. In the end, while expressing its desire to preserve the bridge, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the Caltrans request.

Soon after the approval, the two owners of the Albion River Inn and the owner of Whitesboro Farm filed a lawsuit in San Francisco to block Caltrans from going ahead with the studies.

LWVUS Policy on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

In the September issue of the *Voter*, Cindy Plank wrote about the League's new emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). The full statement of its new policy on DEI follows:

"LWV is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, gender identity, ethnicity, race, native or indigenous origin, age, generation, sexual orientation, culture, religion, belief system, marital status, parental status, socioeconomic status, language, accent, ability status, mental health, educational level or background, geography, nationality, work style, work experience, job role function, thinking style, personality type, physical appearance, political perspective or affiliation and/or any other characteristic that can be identified as recognizing or illustrating diversity. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to the organization's current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities, and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy."



