

DEMOCRACY WORKS

WINTER | 2020

Election Hero, Gloria Powell,
LWV Sacramento,
Poll Observer at Golden 1 Arena



2020 ELECTION OUTREACH

EASY VOTER GUIDE

175,000 guides distributed



VOTER'S EDGE Helped over 2 million voters



YOUTH GOTV CAMPAIGN



4 million accessed our voting info on Snapchat & TikTok

Thank you to the Walter and Evelyn Haas Jr. Fund and Craig Newmark Philanthropies for their support of the LWVC Youth Get out the Vote Campaign.

November Election Recap

Even during a pandemic, when advocates could not conduct business as usual in registering voters, California had a record of over 22 million registered voters before Election Day. That's the highest percentage in the past 80 years! From court cases, to coalitions, to legislative advocacy (see page 4 for details), the LWVC worked hard to create a safe and accessible election for Californians, and they showed up to make their voices heard.

The League reached more low-propensity voters than ever before. Voter's Edge, a joint project of the League of Women Voters of California and Maplight, helped more people make informed decisions about what's on their ballot than in any previous election. Local Leagues and public libraries distributed a multitude of *Easy Voter Guides*, despite minimal opportunities for in-person voter engagement. And for the first time ever, the LWVC connected with over 4 million young voters on Snapchat and TikTok.

While we exercise patience in awaiting final vote tallies, we can take great pride in how many people the LWVC reached and supported through a successful 2020 general election.

Voter Shoutouts

"I just wanted to express thanks to you and the entire Voter's Edge team for all the work you put into the project. It's tremendously helpful, and ever since I discovered the site, I've used it to research and complete my entire ballot with each election. This weekend I'm having my parents over, and since I don't stop hounding them about getting their ballots completed, I'm going to show them [VotersEdge.org](https://www.votersedge.org) and walk them through how to use it." - 2020 Voter

"Thank you for continuing to publish the *Easy Voter Guide*! This is incredibly valuable for our lower income and older voters who don't use electronic resources as much." - 2020 voter

Cover Photo Credit: Joan Cusick Photography at joancusick.com.

Direct Line



Carol Moon Goldberg
Board President

We knew 2020 would be special; we did not know it would be extraordinary. The Centennial of the

founding of the League and of the passage of the 19th Amendment made the year special. A global pandemic, a reckoning with the tragic impacts of racism, and a historic wildfire season made the year extraordinary. Oh, and 2020 was an election year. The LWVC recognized the extraordinary circumstances, adapted its plans, and never faltered from the determination to honor the legacy of the suffragists' work.

Despite everything, the League's advocacy work moved forward. The thing I'm most proud of this year is the coordination of the LWVC with other groups to advocate for justice and equity. For example, in co-sponsoring the legislation that became the successful Proposition 17, the League worked with energetic and effective organizations to restore voting rights to people on parole.

In shepherding Proposition 15, Schools & Communities First, from conception through signature gathering, to the ballot and the ultimate campaign, League members worked with a remarkable coalition of community, parent, health care worker, faith, union, and other working people organizations to take on the biggest corporations and California's mythical "political third rail," Proposition 13. This was not just a tax question; it was a question of equity, of low income and underrepresented communities being limited by the unfair property tax system. Even with a narrow loss, it is clear that the coalition was successful in making its case to Californians.

Our work with other organizations will help to build the LWVC's work in 2021 and beyond. There is more justice and equity to be pursued. The drawing of new district lines for the whole state will be done in the coming year. Together with partner organizations, the LWVC will work to educate communities across the state about how to influence the line drawing to prevent voters from being gerrymandered into insignificance.

Thank you all for your support of the LWVC in this extraordinary year. I look forward to continuing our work together in 2021.



Stephanie Doute
Executive Director

It's a time of reflection as we come to the close of our Centennial anniversary. It was a year that no one could have anticipated. A year in which we came to expect the unexpected and learned to roll with the punches - because the hits kept coming.

I am in continuous awe of League members and supporters. In trying circumstances, you set about ensuring that no matter the obstacles 2020 threw at us, Californians had access to all of the information they needed to be confident in their votes. You did it brilliantly, and with all of the integrity that the League is known for. Thank you.

This year, in addition to all of our usual legislative advocacy and voter education programs like the *Easy Voter Guide*, *Voter's Edge*, *Pros/Cons*, *In-Depths*, and *Vote with the League*, the LWVC also took on two new grant funded programs to reach young, low propensity voters, who are often a challenging group for the League to reach.

First, we joined a coalition of justice focused organizations to create [ElectJusticeCA.org](https://electjusticeca.org). This project sought to help potential voters understand that the power of their voice in seeking justice and driving change in their communities is as valuable at the ballot box as it is in the streets.

Our other new program was a digital youth get out the vote campaign, designed to ensure that young voters understand the power of their vote in driving social change. This effort allowed us to seek out and work with influencers on TikTok and deliver targeted location based messaging via Snapchat. Our influencers delivered LWVC crafted messaging to their audiences, in their own voices and styles. Through this effort, we reached over 4 million low propensity youth voters in ways that were resonant and relevant to them.

2020. Never a dull moment. There has been much sadness, difficulty, and challenge. And through it all, we stood together as the League and found the opportunities. We found the places we could make a difference and persevered through trying times. It is the optimism through challenge, seeing light in the dark, a focus on humanity, and perseverance that are hallmarks of the League. It is what will guide us into our next 100 years.

Thank you for your commitment, your flexibility, your indomitable spirit, and all that you do to make a better California.



Sharon Stone, Trudy Schafer, Raul Macias of ACLU Northern California, and Jennifer Pae

Developing a New Generation of Leaders Through the Trudy Schafer Public Policy Fellowship

There is no doubt, the LWVC sincerely misses Trudy Schafer. We can't help but think how she would have guided us through the many challenges of this year including a dramatic session in the legislature and a historic year for ballot measures. We ask ourselves, "What would Trudy say?" as we analyze and make decisions. And we continue to honor her legacy through action and through the Trudy Schafer Fellowship for Public Policy.

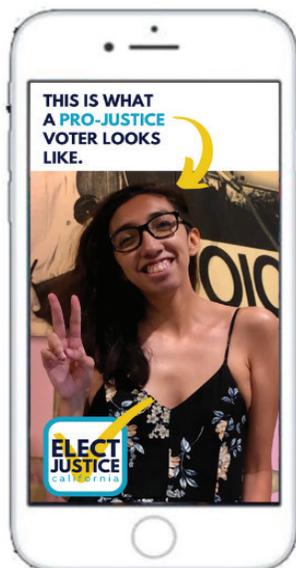
This past year, we welcomed Dr. Karen Jones as the inaugural Trudy Schafer Fellow. After spending the better part of a year expanding our advocacy impact in a broad range of areas, Karen took a role as a Legislative Aide for Assemblymember Arambula. Over the summer, we were thrilled to announce that Andrew Muse-Fisher was selected as the second recipient of the Fellowship.

Andrew has worked with the League for over two years as our Civic Engagement Coordinator, where he demonstrated an unwavering commitment to policy as a driver of change. This position is funded through individual donations, as well as through the Schafer family, who generously committed a \$15,500 matching fund this year to match contributions dollar for dollar, and ensure the Fellowship continues to thrive and uphold Trudy's legacy.



Andrew Muse-Fisher, 2020-2021 Trudy Schafer Public Policy Fellow

WINTER 2020



Legislative Wrap Up

We ended the [2019 legislative session](#) and began 2020 with great optimism and hope, a robust economy, and ambitious goals. The Governor's January budget forecast projected a \$5.6 billion surplus and we had big plans to address the housing crisis and advocate for investments in green technology. But you know what happened next.

By mid-March, COVID-19 had started infecting Californians and the ripples that followed impacted every facet of

our daily lives. Schools, businesses, and even the legislature shut down. California's long economic expansion came to an end and progress in some areas was stymied. Our focus both concentrated on priorities like [Proposition 15, Schools & Communities First](#), and shifted as we faced the virus' threats to democracy and the exigencies created by the killing of George Floyd. While some of our objectives were hindered by the pandemic, we had remarkable success in our mission critical areas of voting rights and racial justice.

Our Biggest Wins:

Free the Vote (McCarty), Proposition 17, restores voting rights to 50,000 Californians on parole. The League co-sponsored the legislation to put the measure on the ballot and signed ballot arguments. Prop 17 confronts the racist legacy of an impediment that has disproportionately impacted the voting strength of California's Black and Latino communities for decades.

The Racial Justice Act (Kalra) is landmark legislation that prohibits the state from seeking or obtaining a criminal conviction, or from imposing a sentence, based on race, ethnicity or national origin. This bill, co-sponsored by the League, was initially set aside due to the effects of COVID, but was revived through intensive advocacy in the closing days of the legislative session and **signed into law** by the Governor.

These achievements would not have been possible without strong coalition allies and your help. Our League members throughout the state worked to get over 7,500 signatures for ballot measure petitions, sent over 8,000 Action Alert messages to the Legislature and governor to pass critical

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bills, and campaigned or advocated locally to accomplish these important reforms.

Despite our best efforts, we also still have work to do on some important issues.

Proposition 15, Schools & Communities

First lost by a razor-thin margin. We are disappointed to have

lost this years-long battle, but this fight has shown us that there is still strong public demand for large corporations to pay their fair share and to support equitable distribution of resources to our communities.

Proposition 16, the Opportunity for All Act, also failed. While this effort to overturn the Prop 209 ban on affirmative action was unsuccessful, the League will continue to find avenues to work toward equity in public education and employment.

Overall, the League took positions on nearly 80 pieces of legislation. Here are some highlights from the past year.

Andrew Muse-Fisher participating in a virtual hearing.



Government

When the state shut down in March, we knew that COVID-19 would not be just a public health crisis. That's why we immediately started working with state and county elections officials, as well as a broad coalition of stakeholders, to adapt our elections to be both accessible and safe. We helped craft and advocate for three emergency bills in response to the pandemic.

- Every registered voter in the state automatically received their ballot in the mail for the November election through passage of **AB 860** (Berman).
- Access to sufficient voting locations and ballot drop boxes, providing a broad range of robust in person voting options, was guaranteed through **SB 423** (Umberg).
- The primary election was moved from March to June in non-presidential election years through **SB 970** (Umberg). This allows cities and counties more time to accommodate the likely delay of Census 2020 data for making redistricting decisions and provides sufficient time for community outreach and engagement.

We also joined two separate lawsuits to ensure that active, registered voters in California would automatically have access to vote-by-mail ballots.

Ensuring a healthy census was also a priority for the LWVC this year. While many of you worked diligently to help citizens participate, the LWVC focused on legal issues. We participated in four lawsuits covering issues including timing of the census and redistricting, as well as contesting the Presidential Executive Order that excludes undocumented residents from the census data used to reapportion Congressional districts. At the time of writing, one of the cases we joined seeking to ensure that undocumented individuals are counted for apportionment is pending at the Supreme Court of the United States.

Natural Resources

With a new focus on the COVID-19 crisis, and the resulting deficit, efforts on climate change, waste reduction, natural resource conservation, and green technology were stalled. Numerous bills introduced in 2019 and early 2020 remain on hold. One that failed in the Legislature during its final days, [AB 3030](#) (Kalra) would have asked for California to comply with the United Nations Global Call to conserve 30 percent of land and coastal (marine) areas. Even though the legislation failed, the goal did not die. Governor Newsom issued an [Executive Order](#) that allows California to work toward that objective.

One silver lining is the passage of [SB 288](#) (Wiener), which will help communities expedite work on sustainable transportation systems.

Social Policy

Perhaps our greatest accomplishments are our criminal justice victories. Beyond taking a strong stance in favor of the Racial Justice Act and two ballot measures (Propositions 17 and 25), and opposing Proposition 20, we successfully supported a number of criminal justice and public safety bills.

- Counties are authorized to create sheriff oversight boards. [AB 1185](#) (McCarty).
- “Intellectual disability” has been redefined in order to better protect those individuals from severe sentencing, such as the death penalty. [AB 2512](#) (Stone).
- Tools to eliminate racial bias in the jury selection process are now available [AB 3070](#) (Weber).

Other successful social policy legislation includes the following bills.

- Public utilities are now prohibited from disclosing customer billing information to the Department of Homeland Security, as such data could compromise households with any undocumented immigrant family members. [AB 2788](#) (Gloria).

- Private detention facilities will be required to provide the same standard of care that is provided in public (government) facilities. [AB 3228](#) (Bonta).
- A Student Borrowers Bill of Rights will give student borrowers more assistance and protection for loans needed for housing, food, and other living expenses. [AB 376](#) (Stone)
- Young people between the ages of 12-17 may no longer be charged with criminal offenses due to truancy or failure to obey parents. These charges have historically put youth at greater risk of falling into the clutches of the criminal justice/juvenile court system and experiencing a cascade of legal problems. [AB 901](#) (Gipson).

Looking Ahead

COVID-19 isn't going away just yet, and neither are climate change, the housing crisis, or any number of problems. The Black Lives Matter protests throughout the year have reminded us how inequality is still deeply rooted in our society. Another season of wildfires has shown how susceptible California is to natural disasters. Our state faces multiple urgent challenges that have been further compounded by the pandemic. Yet this may also be an opportunity to rethink what is normal and find opportunities for systemic and structural changes to lift all of us up toward more economic security and a greater quality of life. With 2020 nearly behind us, we are gearing up for 2021 and the next century of the League working for a more equitable future for all Californians.



Students from Berkeley City College consulting their ballots.



She is Me, League Activism & Policy

*Maxine Anderson
from San Francisco*

Meet Maxine Anderson, a member of the League of Women Voters of California Board of Directors and part of our new Criminal Justice Reform Committee. Maxine discovered the League of Women Voters in San Francisco after working on an unsuccessful presidential campaign. We sat down with Maxine to find out why she joined the League and what the future holds for our 100-year-old organization.

In 2003 Maxine was disgusted with politics. The war in Iraq was offensive to her. WHO would stand up

“We have to affirm humanity. All our positions speak about this. We affirm the humanity of the people excluded from the system.”

against it? A friend invited her to learn about a new candidate running for president. Maxine got involved and after working on the campaign,

Maxine couldn't let her political fervor go and attended a new member League meeting at the statehouse. Afterward, she was recruited for voter service activities and jumped at the chance to volunteer. She found it refreshing to speak in a nonpartisan fashion and was asked to join the board and take on advocacy work. “I was mad, I was pissed, and I had a lot of energy and said yes!” Since then, Maxine has filled a variety of roles at her local League including Advocacy Chair. These roles led to her newest role at the state League.

“You know, there are so many huge things that need to be addressed right now. You can be paralyzed by the enormity of what we face, environmentally, the issues

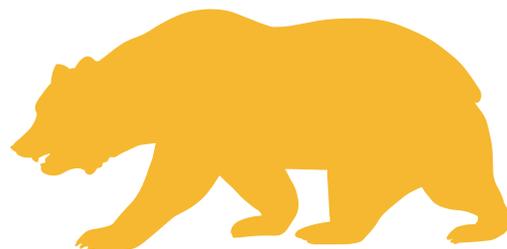
of justice and equity - a myriad of issues. I always tell people to find the thing you are passionate about and do that.”

Reflecting on the Suffrage Centennial, “I always thought that the suffrage movement was some white women in white dresses marching down the street and the men gave them the vote. Women were tortured and doing everything - sitting down, standing up, fighting”.

Maxine, reflecting on the future, believes the League is learning more about partnerships in advocacy and better ways to show up on the issues. “We are learning not to take the lead. We are making ourselves known to groups that may not have thought of us first as an ally”.

“Over the next 100 years, the League is going to be its most effective. As we diversify, as we say as an organization that all human beings should have the right to vote, and all human beings are involved in social justice, we have to affirm humanity. All our positions speak about this. We affirm the humanity of the people excluded from the system.”

Maxine was born and raised in Chicago and attended public schools there. She has worked in both the private and public sectors: first as a private industry insurance adjuster and then as a claims adjuster in San Francisco's City Attorney's Office. The San Francisco Human Rights Commission gave her the HERO award for her outstanding contributions to voting rights. For fun, she enjoys traveling and reading. Read her full interview and learn more about the She is Me project: lwwc.org/sheisme.





Thank You For Your Support!

You are receiving this newsletter because you've donated to the League of Women Voters of California in the last year. For that we want to thank you! Your support made it possible for us to ensure a safe and accessible election, defend the census, and fight for equity based policies in California. We will continue fighting for those same ideals into the future. And to do that into the next 100 years, we still need you!

Ways to Give

Your support allows us to educate and advocate throughout the state of California.

Make a Donation Online

You can make quick online donations at lwvc.org/donate or a tax-deductible donation at cavotes.org.

Become A Monthly Donor

As a monthly donor, your ongoing support to LWVC is significant. Monthly donors mean that together we ensure elections are free, fair, accessible. Visit lwvc.org/monthly or you can set up a monthly tax-deductible donation at cavotes.org.

Honor A Loved One

Any donation can be made in honor of someone you care about. It can be for someone's birthday, in memory of someone's life, or for any special reason. Visit lwvc.org/tribute.

Donate a Vehicle

Vehicles, boats, and RV's can be donated to the League of Women Voters of California Education Fund. It's easy, go to cavotes.org/auto for more information.

Transfer Stocks, Bonds, or Mutual Funds

Making a gift of stocks, bonds, or other securities allows you to make an immediate impact on our efforts to protect democracy. Visit lwvc.org/stocks to learn more.