

# DEMOCRACY WORKS

FALL | 2022







# Direct Line



**Carol Moon Goldberg**  
*Board President*

## Ahhhh... Thanksgiving and then December!

Time to exhale, to push away the stress of a hectic election year and a packed legislative session. Also a time to appreciate League members and League supporters who care deeply about empowering voters and defending democracy. Thank you all for your personal and financial support to the League of Women Voters of California (LWVC).

It feels as if we've been in a continuous election season since 2020. One thing was consistent in the League's approach throughout this time...recognition of the need to encourage voter engagement and to counter the dis- and misinformation that confuses voters and discourages them from participating. To that end, the LWVC created the General Election Outreach Toolkit to help voters learn the mechanics of participating in our representative democracy. Based on the League's signature plain language guide, the Easy Voter Guide, this toolkit included social media engagement tools in four languages, links to information sources, and voter hotlines. The Toolkit was developed with two great partner organizations and was available to all nonprofits throughout the state.

The LWVC's advocacy arm continues its awesome work in a variety of areas. Because I'm on the subject of elections, I want to highlight the success in passing a bill to protect voters from being purged from the registration rolls without being informed and without an opportunity to respond. The same bill protects the voting rights of people under conservatorship. The LWVC also spearheaded the work of a coalition asking for money to be budgeted for voter education and outreach. We and our coalition partners know that education is necessary to shrink the participation gap among California voters and to create a more representative democracy.

There is much to talk about with League advocacy in areas like housing, criminal justice, and climate change. Please take a look at the Year in Review in this publication to learn of the important work that was done and remains.

I am so proud of the work of the League. I look forward to accomplishing more with you in the future.



**Stephanie Doute**  
*Executive Director*

## What a year it has been.

We have all been slowly adjusting to what the world looks like and how we engage in it personally, and as Leagues, we navigate more in-person events and elements of life. I have been wildly impressed by the work of Leagues around the state creating balance between online voter engagement and events that are accessible to a broad community and in-person events that bring people together to truly connect in a human way. Thank you for all of your work as we continue to build the League of the future.

In the coming pages, we highlight a lot of the work we have done in the past year. I hope you will spend time really digging in. There have been some incredible legislative successes this year on bills across our program areas, and significant progress made on building equity and justice in California. I am proud the League is leading with partners on these issues.

And speaking of equity and justice, I am excited to invite you to join us at the LWVC Biennial Convention in May 2023! Our theme this year will be "Power & Possibility" - because our votes, our advocacy work, our community organizing is all done to help people exercise their power to create possibilities for a better democracy and a better world.

And this year, I am thrilled about a completely unique fundraising event we will be holding alongside the Convention - Drag for Democracy! With the Convention based in the heart of San Francisco, there is no better way to experience local culture than with a drag show. Drag for Democracy will be a celebration of people exemplifying the values and strength of our democracy through their work in advocacy and activism for LGBTQ+ people, rights, and equality. LGBTQ+ advocates, and indeed people who are not part of the dominant culture, have always been at the forefront of efforts to build power, create possibility, and expand our democracy to include all people. And with much fanfare, glitter, and glam, we will honor community members making democracy work as they build justice and equity in California.

We are a serious organization, working on serious issues - and it's important that we also take time to rest, celebrate, and have some fun. Whether that be at Drag for Democracy, or with your loved ones through the holiday season, I hope that you make time for respite and joy. The work will still be there, progress needs protecting, and the movement needs us to take care of ourselves so we can keep showing up.

I am grateful to each of you for all that you have done for voters and to make a better California. As always, I am proud to stand alongside you as we do this work together.





# Year In Review

2022 was a very active year as the state League emerged from our COVID-19 cocoon to the new normal — a hybrid of online and in-person engagement.

Out of the almost 5,000 bills that were introduced in the two-year legislative session, we tracked 345 and took positions on 117! We also dove into evaluations of the state and local redistricting processes, worked to implement the restoration of voting rights to people on parole, continued to provide guidance to counties on the Voter's Choice Act, served on the Secretary of State's Motor Voter Task Force, and engaged in a plethora of other public policy issues. Our Advocacy Interest Groups are growing in the areas of Criminal Justice, Healthcare, Housing and Homelessness, Climate Change, Water, and Immigration, as more League members find ways to get involved on issues that are important to them!

And of course, none of this would be possible without the tireless work of our advocacy team and grassroots leaders. Thank you for helping us significantly impact the well-being of Californians. Many thanks to volunteer Deputy Director for Social Policy Ashley Ravache, whose work with the coalition was instrumental to the bill's successful passage.

## OUR BIGGEST WINS

**Groundbreaking Anti-Racism Victory**

Three years of intensive work have paid off with the League's co-sponsored AB 256 (Kalra), The Racial Justice Act for All, which adds retroactivity to the Racial Justice Act of 2020. The law empowers defendants to challenge charges, convictions, or punishment if they can show that anyone involved in their case — a judge, attorney, officer, expert witness, or juror — demonstrated racial bias during the process regardless of when it happened. The New York Times reports that the original Racial Justice Act (2020) is already changing lives for the better. Recently, a California Judge in Contra Costa County overturned the murder convictions of two men, and granted them new trials, citing that the use of rap lyrics in their convictions violated the Racial Justice Act. Ellen McDonnell, a public defender in Contra Costa County commented "This case realizes the promise of the California Racial Justice Act, which was designed to prohibit racial bias in policing, prosecution, and sentencing."

### California Voters Get the Protections they Deserve

We built in safeguards to prevent erroneous voter registration purges and protect the voting rights of people with disabilities under conservatorship with AB 2841 (Low), a bill the LWVC co-sponsored with the ACLU. Californians will now receive notice before being removed from the voting rolls and have an opportunity to prevent themselves from being removed in error. This is a big win for voters.

### California Election Workers Get the Protections they Deserve

Election officials across the nation are resigning due to threats and harassment. California officials have also been threatened. SB 1131 (Newman) allows all public employees experiencing intimidation to enroll in California's Safe at Home address confidentiality program. The League supported this important step to protect our election officials who are on the frontlines of safeguarding our democracy.

### Reproductive Rights Safeguarded

It has been a big year for reproductive rights in California. We were signatories to the ballot argument on Prop 1, the measure that will enshrine reproductive freedom as a state constitutional right. We supported numerous other bills, including ones to protect people from criminal prosecution for self-administered abortions, miscarriages, and stillbirths, AB 2223 [Wicks]; to expand the availability of providers of abortions in the first trimester, SB 1375 [Atkins], and to prohibit the enforcement of out-of-state fetal heartbeat abortion restriction laws and those that impose civil liability on a person seeking, receiving, performing, inducing, or aiding a person in obtaining an abortion, AB 1666 [Bauer-Kahan].

### Local Redistricting Reform for Fair Maps

With the passage of AB 1307 (Cervantes), AB 2030 (Arambula), and AB 2494 (Salas), Riverside, Fresno, and Kern counties will all have independent redistricting commissions in place for the next round in 2030. These bills, designed to prevent partisan gerrymandering and increase public participation, were League priorities.

The state League is part of a coalition of organizations thinking through recommendations for legislation to improve and advance local-level independent redistricting more broadly.

### A Natural Resources Team Triumph

The League of Women Voters of Marin County planted a seed with their Assemblymember that bloomed into legislation requiring local governments to consider sea level rise and other environmental factors when planning for new housing. Marc Levine, the author of AB 1445, noted that "[v]ast areas of California are increasingly vulnerable to wildfires, sea level rise, and severe drought. We must ensure that badly needed investments in housing are not placed at risk by the climate crisis."

### Win-Wins for Housing and the Environment

In exciting wins for both housing and the environment, the LWVC supported bill AB 2011 (Wicks) which allows affordable housing to be built through a ministerial, streamlined process in commercially zoned districts, keeping development close to city centers to avoid sprawl and achieve greenhouse gas reductions. And AB 2097 (Friedman) ends parking mandates in many California cities, which is expected to lower housing costs and reduce pollution.



Racial Justice Act for All Coalition Celebration



## MORE VICTORIES

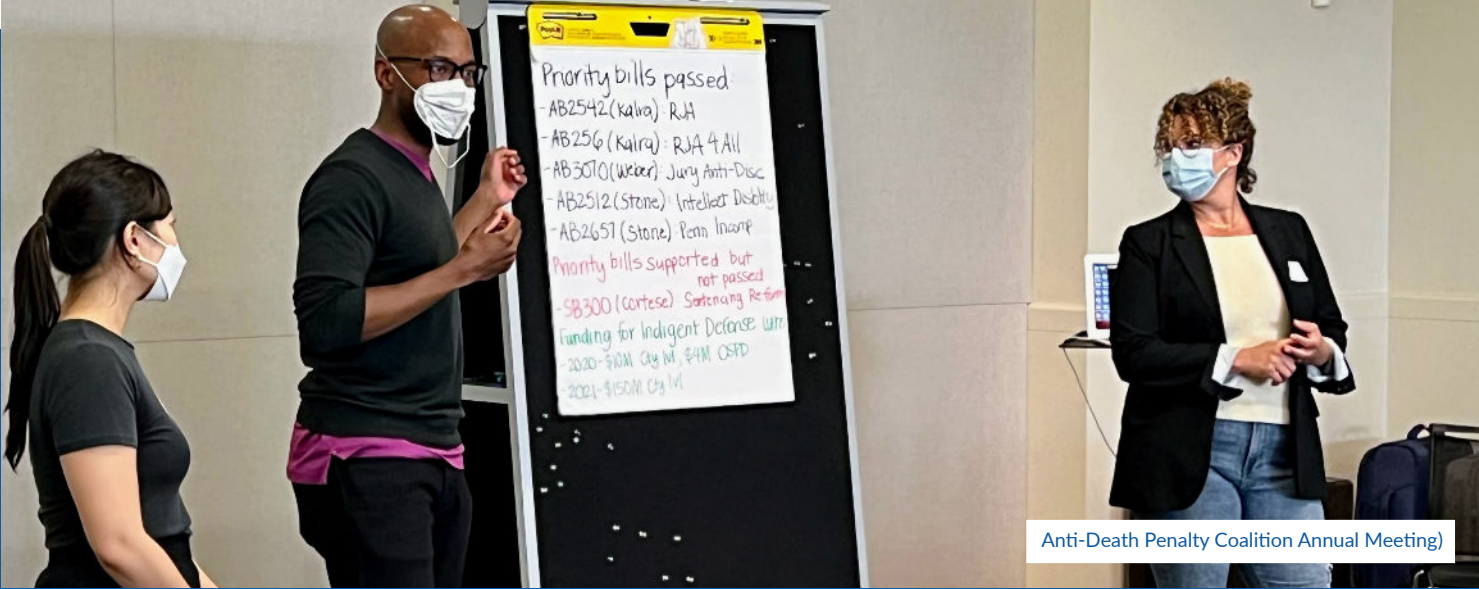
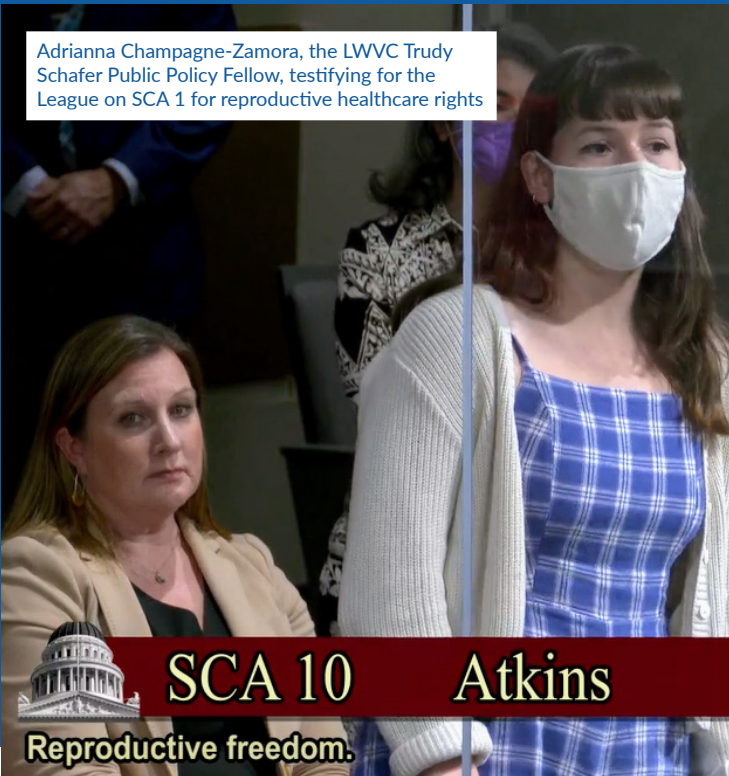
The following are a few more highlights from the nearly 80 pieces of legislation that the League advocated for in 2022.

- Education, immigrants, and equity are all served by SB 1141 (Limón), that will make college more accessible for undocumented students by removing the two year cap on full-time enrollment in credit courses that can be counted toward qualifying for a non-resident tuition exemption. Furthermore, opportunities for high school students to take community college coursework were expanded by AB 102 (Holden).
- AB 2657 (Stone) requires courts to vacate the death sentences of people who have become “permanently incompetent” to be executed due to a mental illness or disorder making them unable to rationally understand either the punishment or the reason for it.
- Turtles are happy! California will reduce single-use plastic pollution with the passage of the Plastic Pollution Producer Responsibility Act, SB 54 (Allen). The watershed legislation mandates significant reductions in single-use foodware and packaging and holds producers financially responsible for the plastic they put into our communities.
- Voting rights for people who have finished their prison sentences are advanced by improving the accuracy of conviction data that is reported to elections officials through the passage of SB 504 (Becker). The bill also clarifies the right of military and overseas voters, and voters with disabilities to complete same-day voter registration and cast a ballot.
- We permanently ended the practice of prison gerrymandering with AB 1848 (Bryan) which requires that when drawing political boundaries, people who are incarcerated be counted as residents of their home community, and not where the prison is located.
- More Sheriff and District Attorney elections will occur in presidential election years due to AB 759 (McCarty). Holding those elections at times when we see the highest rates and broadest diversity of voter turnout will increase the inclusiveness of the election and the accountability of the elected offices.
- We enacted protections against frivolous recall elections with AB 2584 (Berman). This legislation will also help provide voters with accurate information, maximize community participation in government decision-making, increase transparency, and boost participation by consolidating special elections.

- Sometimes success means defeating a bill. That was the case with AB 2808 (O'Donnell), which would have prohibited the use of ranked choice voting in California state and local elections, including in numerous charter cities where it has been successfully used for over a decade. Testimony and lobbying by the LWVC was instrumental in ensuring this bill did not go forward.

## YOU CAN'T WIN THEM ALL – WATER'S TURBULENT YEAR

- It can't always be smooth sailing. Lack of ongoing funding led to the Governor's veto of SB 222 (Dodd), defeating efforts to provide water affordability assistance for drinking and wastewater services to low-income ratepayers.
- The absence of dedicated funding also led to the demise of AB 252 (Rivas), which would have taken land out of agricultural production in response to drought and declining availability of surface and groundwater.
- Opposition from some agricultural organizations and water districts led to the failure of AB 2201 (Bennett), which would have brought well-permitting into line with the planning required by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).
- Regulations on urban water use fared better, with the Governor signing SB 1157 (Hertzberg), tightening urban water use objectives.



## BEYOND BILLS

Our work goes beyond legislation. Among other things, we also advise the work of key state agencies to ensure they meet the needs of Californians, guide effective implementation of legislation, and provide education related to advocacy.

### Motor Voter Task Force

Last year we passed AB 796 (Berman) to improve the voter registration process at the DMV and help the 3 million eligible, yet unregistered, Californians register and vote. The bill builds on the success of California's Motor Voter program, codifies best practices developed through the LWVC lawsuit and settlement agreement with the DMV, requires greater transparency and training, and removes impediments to equitable voter registration. This year the LWVC was chosen to sit on the Secretary of State's Motor Voter Task Force, established pursuant to the legislation and charged with monitoring the DMV voter registration process.

### State and Local Redistricting

The LWVC Board Director Helen Hutchison and former LWVUS President Chris Carson lead our work on redistricting. With the active phase of state redistricting completed, they are now in the evaluation and recommendations phase. The LWVC, in partnership with Common Cause California, has commissioned an independent report being authored by Dr. Christian Grose of the Schwarzenegger Institute. He is conducting interviews with a wide variety of individuals and organizations and will include a case study of the process in the Los Angeles area.

As with state redistricting, local redistricting is in the assessment phase. The rules for city and county redistricting were changed by a LWVC co-sponsored bill, the Fair Maps Act of 2019. We are now working with local Leagues and our partners to determine further legislative changes that may be needed.

### Housing and Homelessness Webinar Series

In order to advocate well, we need to learn about issues. The League has been hosting webinars centered around housing and homelessness issues in California. Our events so far have focused on establishing project funding and how climate change intersects with housing development. You can view past webinars on our YouTube channel. Join us for future webinars on some of the most pressing issues facing Californians and hear insights from some leading experts in the field.

### Future of California Elections Conference

The League was proud to plan and host the 2022 Future of California Elections (FoCE) Conference. Our theme this year, "Democracy for All: What's Next for Building Equity in California's Elections?" set out to help us think together about the state of our democracy and elections in California, and build upon the momentum and innovations we are driving in leading secure, accessible democracy. Drawing over 200 people, the FoCE Conference brought together elections officials, election reform advocates, researchers, organizers, and other stakeholders to discuss key topics in voting and elections, build relationships, and together begin to imagine a future for our elections that better serves all voters.





# 2022 Voter Engagement

## LOOKING FORWARD

We have a big year planned ahead and rely on the generosity of League members to sustain our advocacy programs and services. The League is dependent on member donations and your support is what allows us to achieve these goals.

### Ballot Measures

The 2024 ballot will include SCA 2 (Allen) to repeal Article 34 of the California Constitution, thereby removing legal impediments to building low-income and public housing in our cities. Eradicating this antiquated provision will help California move past redlining and segregation, and foster the construction of affordable housing.

### Legislation

It's still early stages, but we have already begun coalition work on amendments to the Fair Maps Act to improve local redistricting. And watch out for the possibility of further legislation to require independent redistricting commissions in more counties.

## Shrinking California's Voter Participation Gap

Despite the fact that we are a state where underrepresented groups are a majority, and have recently passed laws designed to remove impediments and promote access to voting, there are significant disparities in participation among youth and voters of color compared to our older, non-Hispanic white population.

In 2022, the League led a coalition in a first-of-its-kind Voter Education & Outreach Legislative Budget Request, which was championed by a group of legislators. The idea is to use robust voter education and outreach as a tool to shrink the participation gap and create a more representative democracy. We worked with the Secretary of State, the Governor's office, and other stakeholders to build support, and while we were unable to get the funding incorporated into last year's budget, we developed some key relationships and a solid foundation on which to continue the advocacy in 2023.

We have much to do in the year ahead - and we look forward to you being a part of it!

## Bringing trusted information to voters is increasingly important in our society.

Bombarded by disinformation, conspiracy theories, and just plain lies - voters need reliable, trustworthy information that they can count on. This is where we shine. For decades the League has been providing this kind of information, and we are needed now more than ever.

During the 2022 elections, the LWVC:

- Updated, supported, and launched Voter's Edge (a project of the League of Women Voters of California Education Fund and Maplight), your online ballot guide for this election year. We partnered with both the Los Angeles Times and Public Media Stations across the state to reach even more voters in more places.
- Created and distributed over 140,000 copies of the plain language, community reviewed, *Easy Voter Guide* in 5 languages.

- Worked to close the participation gap in California elections by running a Get Out the Vote Campaign on TikTok and Snapchat, created by and for younger Black and Latino/a/x voters.
- Created and distributed a turnkey voter education and outreach toolkit in 4 languages, used by local Leagues and community partners across the state. Special thanks to our partners at Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus and NALEO for collaborating with us on translation.
- Created and distributed the League of Women Voters of California Pros & Cons Ballot Measure explainers, and a series of accompanying videos that supported thousands of voters and hundreds of local League community presentations across the state.
- Created and distributed a turnkey voter education and outreach toolkit complete with social media graphics, key messages, and alt text in 5 languages for local Leagues and community partners across the state to use to fight election disinformation. The toolkit provided consistent, factual, non-partisan information for voters on how to participate in the election.



# League Updates

## Meet the Newest League Team Member: Kristy Oriol



The LWVC is excited to welcome our newest staff member, Kristy Oriol. Kristy joins the LWVC as our Development Director. Kristy holds a Masters in Public Policy and Administration from Sacramento State and has worked in the non-profit sector for over a decade. Before joining the League, Kristy was the Director of Development for the largest human services non-profit in the North Lake Tahoe/ Truckee region. In her free time, Kristy enjoys spending time with her two young children and trail running with her dogs. Please join us in welcoming her!

## Save the Date: 2023 LWVC Biennial Convention + Drag for Democracy

Mark your calendars for the League's most epic fundraising event yet! Join us for Drag for Democracy — an evening of Glitter & Glam to honor and celebrate community members working at the forefront of LGBTQ+ equity & democracy — on May 20, 2023.

LGBTQ+ advocates and activists, and people from all marginalized communities, have been at the forefront of expanding our democracy to include all people. Over cocktails

and with a hefty dose of fabulousness, we will celebrate all of the work this community has done to build a more inclusive California and democracy.

The event will be co-Hosted by the League of Women Voters of California and the League of Women Voters of San Francisco and held in conjunction with the 2023 LWVC Biennial Convention (May 19–21, 2023). Save the dates and join us next year at both events!



# Leaguers in Action

## Stephanie Gomez

Stephanie Gomez was born and raised in Los Angeles and is a community organizer and environmental advocate. Stephanie joined the League of Women Voters of Greater Los Angeles six years ago while attending Mount Saint Mary's University and is now a board director focusing on membership and outreach.

*"The League is important because our organization is a reminder of how critical our vote is. The League has been a really big part of my life and helped me find my place in politics as well as instilling in me the value of using policy reform to address the issues facing my community."*

**Stephanie Gomez**



Some of Stephanie's ongoing League work includes interviewing elected officials to raise awareness about League interest in their legislation and policies. She is also busy recruiting new board members in her role on the Nominating Committee. Outside the League, Stephanie recently founded the Shift Our Ways Collective, helping grow sustainable communities across Los Angeles.

### Stephanie's favorite quote:

"If you say it long enough, it starts to be a part of you."  
- Dr. Rita Pierson, educator

### What does Stephanie want to be remembered for?

"I would like to be remembered for my community organizing work and knowing that I have linked as many people to opportunities as possible - something I really value."

### Stephanie's most admired women include:

- Rachel Louise Carson, marine biologist, author, and conservationist who inspired her environmental advocacy efforts.
- Jennifer Richard, her high school teacher and mentor who helped Stephanie start her sustainability and awareness nonprofit linked to the school.

# PROGRESS NEEDS PROTECTING

## Help Protect Progress in California

As Californians, we celebrate our state's leadership in independent citizen-led redistricting that eliminates gerrymandering; increasing access to the ballot for all eligible voters; and advancing equity, racial justice, reproductive health, and climate protection. For all our state has accomplished, we cannot be complacent. We need your help to ensure progress is protected. Your contribution will help us protect progress. Our voices are powerful. Our vigilance is needed.



Donate at [lwvc.org/donate2022](http://lwvc.org/donate2022).

## Other Ways to Contribute:

### Donate Online

Support during this time is more important than ever. Support the LWVC during this crucial time: [lwvc.org/donate](http://lwvc.org/donate).

### Become a Monthly Donor

Becoming a monthly donor gives us a voice. Together we can ensure elections are free, fair, accessible, and reduce the influence of money in our elections. Become a monthly donor at [lwvc.org/monthly](http://lwvc.org/monthly).

### Donate Stock

As the tax year comes to a close and you are thinking how best to donate your dollars, please consider giving a gift of stock to the LWVC Education Fund. Donate stock, the best democracy investment you can make: [bit.ly/LWVCStock](http://bit.ly/LWVCStock).

### Honor a Loved One

Send a card to someone you care about in honor of a birthday, in memory of someone's life, or for any special reason. More at [lwvc.org/tribute](http://lwvc.org/tribute).

### Legacy Giving

Help us unlock democracy for future generations of Californians by including the League in your estate planning: [lwvc.org/legacy](http://lwvc.org/legacy).