City of Fremont Assists Newly Arriving Afghan Refugees

During Thanksgiving week, the *New York Times* featured our very own city of Fremont in an article about the resettlement of Afghan refugees in the U.S. after fleeing from the takeover by the Taliban [“For Afghan Refugees, a Choice Between Community and Opportunity,” *New York Times*, November 24, 2021]. The article pointed out that dating back to the 1980s, Afghan refugees have found a welcoming place in the Fremont area where they could secure jobs, find an affordable place to live, and raise their children surrounded by mosques, halal restaurants, and thousands of other Afghans.

Today, although newly arriving refugees may be able to find employment and community, affordable housing is a significant challenge. The alternative, the *Times* points out, is to send the refugees to places like Fargo, N.D., or Tulsa, Okla., where jobs may be plentiful and housing inexpensive, but those communities lack the kind of cultural support that the Southern Alameda County offers. In a time of personal upheaval, displaced Afghans would most likely find language barriers, few social services, and perhaps hostility toward foreigners.

The City of Fremont’s Human Services Department has established an Afghan Relief Fund to provide assistance to newly arriving Afghan refugees. Proceeds may also be used to aid those still in Afghanistan whom the U.S. Government or NGOs are still helping to escape. According to the City website, the fund was initially started as a local effort to assist and support Afghan friends and neighbors in Southern Alameda County (many seeking visas and refugee status for their family members) and to aide other Afghans assigned to our community for refugee resettlement.

“Immigration policies should promote reunification of immediate families; meet economic, business and employment needs; and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises.”

–League of Women Voters of the United States
“Word about the fund was picked up by national media like CBS and the New York Times,” says the website. “Fremont has been heartened by an outpouring of support from all over the country… The amount of funds raised has exceeded our initial expectations with funds generously arriving from all over the United States. While serving refugees coming to Southern Alameda County will continue to be our priority, requests may be also be reviewed and considered from a larger geographic base.”

**How to Help**

Donations to the Afghan Relief Fund may be made on the City [website](#). In addition, when members of LWVFNUC celebrate the holiday season by gathering on New Year’s Day at Fremont’s Central Park, the League will collect and forward donations from anyone who wants to contribute to the Afghan Relief Fund. Checks should be made payable to City of Fremont, with “AR Help” noted on the memo line.

*Other Ways to Give*

- To donate directly to the City, make check payable to City of Fremont, with “AR Help” noted on the memo line. Mail it to City of Fremont Human Services Department, P.O. Box 5006, Fremont, CA 94537-5006.
- If you have questions about other ways to make financial contributions to the Afghan Refugee Help fund, please contact Paula Manczuk-Hannay, Development Officer, via email or call 510-574-2049.

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**Striding into the New Year with a Holiday Gathering!**

*It has been so very long since we’ve seen each other in person!* This sentiment continues to be expressed whenever we meet on Zoom, our only means of safely gathering since the pandemic began 22 months ago. Many of us hold a strong desire to gather together in-person and share our mutual friendship and respect for the good work that we all to do together—and to celebrate our continued efforts in making democracy work.

Thus, the LWVFNUC Board decided that it would feel terrific to come together in a COVID-safe outdoor setting, and to ring in the New Year as we see old friends, meet new ones, maybe take a walk around the Elizabeth, and share a good time. We hope you agree.

While the League will provide individually wrapped treats, you are welcome to pack your own food and drinks as well. Everyone is welcome as long as they are vaccinated—League members, family, friends, children. Pets (on leash) are welcome too!
At this gathering, we will be collecting donations for the Afghan Refugee Fund established by the City of Fremont to help those refugees settling in Southern Alameda County after fleeing unsafe conditions brought on by the Taliban takeover of their country. If you are interested in donating, you can make your check payable to: City of Fremont, with “AR Help” noted on the memo line. We will send the checks to the City of Fremont.

**WHEN:** January 1, 2022 (New Year’s Day) from 12:00 noon-2:00 pm  
**WHERE:** Palms Pavilion Picnic Area at Fremont’s Central Park (located behind Aqua Adventure Water Park on Paseo Padre Parkway) The Palms Pavilion Picnic Area has plenty of parking available. It is open-air and partially covered. Due to the time of year, it may be chilly, so dress accordingly. And while we desperately need rain, we hope there is no rain on January 1. But please note, HEAVY RAIN CANCELS.

Hoping to see you for this in-person and safe outdoor holiday gathering!

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**Heading Toward National Convention, League Members to Participate in Planning Program for the Coming Two Years**

When the League of Women Voters of the United States holds its biennial convention in June 2022, delegates will vote on the proposed program for the ensuing two years. The vote will be the culmination of months of Program Planning by state and local Leagues and Inter-League Organizations (ILOs). On January 29, members of LWVFNUC will formulate their recommendations about what we believe the proposed national program should be.

**What is League Program?**

League program is the education and advocacy platform that we adopt to move our mission forward. Every year in the months leading up to convention—alternating between California in odd-numbered years and National League in even-numbered years—members meet to review program and propose issues for study or action. Program planning is the grassroots process of recommending and selecting governmental issues for study and consensus and then arriving at a position for advocacy.

During January and February 2022, Leagues will conduct program planning and make recommendations. Leagues are also asked to share information on how their work will impact the
Campaign for Making Democracy Work® as well as to identify LWVUS positions that they intend to use in education and lobbying. This process is a hallmark of the League of Women Voters grassroots role in study and action.

**What are the national League positions?**

Employing the well-known League process of study-consensus-action, the current list of LWVUS positions covers these topics:

- Citizen’s Right to Vote
- DC Self-Government and Full Voting Representation
- Apportionment
- Redistricting
- Money in Politics (Formerly Campaign Finance)
- Selection of the President
- Voter Representation/Electoral Systems
- Citizen’s Right to Know/Citizen Participation
- Constitutional Amendment Proposals
- Constitutional Conventions
- Individual Liberties
- Public Policy on Reproductive Choices
- Congress
- The Presidency
- Privatization
- United Nations
- Trade
- Developing Countries
- Arms Control
- Military Policy and Defense Spending
- Natural Resources
- Resource Management
- Transfer of Federal Public Lands
- Air Quality
- Solid Waste
- Nuclear Waste
- Climate Change
- Water Resources
- Nuclear Issues
- Public Participation
- Agriculture Policies
- Equality of Opportunity
- Employment
- Fair Housing
- Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action
- Pay Equity
- Equal Rights for Women
- Same Gender Equality
- Education
- Federal Role in Public Education
- Fiscal Policy
- Funding of Entitlements
- Health Care
- Immigration
- Meeting Basic Human Needs
- Income Assistance
- Transportation
- Housing Supply
- Child Care
- Early Intervention for Children at Risk
- Violence Prevention
- Gun Policy
- Urban Policy
- Death Penalty
- Sentencing Policy
- Human Trafficking

All of these current LWVUS positions are contained in a publication called *Impact on Issues*, which can be accessed online on this website: [https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues](https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues). Participants in the January 29 Program Planning Zoom meeting must be members of LWVFNUC, although if members have friends or family who have an interest in the League, they can be invited to attend the meeting. Registration information will be sent to members in January. Please plan on attending this very important meeting so that you can help shape the direction of the LWVUS, as well as your local LWVFNUC.
President’s Message

There are only two mistakes one can make along the road to truth, not going all the way, and not starting. – Buddha

We are in December, and 2021 is almost over! I hope we can stay positive despite this pandemic and the new variants as we head towards 2022. Let’s not let 2022 find us as a “deer caught in our headlights.” Let us look forward with steadfastness as we consider the tasks that need to be done as an organization that believes in transparency.

There will be much effort needed by volunteers as we enter into a year of mid-year elections. June 7th is not that far into the future when we consider how early candidates begin their campaigns. Please consider joining along with our LWVFNUC Board members as we plan our strategies to complete our tasks of informing voters in our communities. We also plan to consider following through on LWV involvements and projects with County, Bay Area, State and United States.

I am pleased with the arduous efforts of our board members, committee leaders, and individual members who continue to be involved with informing and educating our communities. Thank you to each member who has offered to take on a task, such as the editors for our newsletter, Evelyn La Torre and Jane Mueller, our Secretary, Rita Manning, and Sets Amann as our Action Chair. We are excited with our Program Planning team, led by Andrea Schacter, as they seek out speakers with topics related to our program planning goals. We appreciate Dennis Godden and Julie Dunkle for their continued efforts to complete the job descriptions review and updates that will add to a more streamlined and efficient organization.

Thank you to everyone who has assisted in completing our tasks and to all who shared a word of encouragement. I consider those with leadership experience to be my mentors and new friends, such as Syeda Inamdar. Thank you, Peter and Alexandra Starr, whom I consider our best cheerleaders for LWV, and I look forward to gaining more LWV knowledge and in growing our friendship!

As we enter the holiday season, I wish you all joy, happiness, and balance as we enter 2022. Please find time to gather, enjoy one another, and laugh, of course within pandemic protocols. We continue to have our LWVFNUC Board Meetings on Zoom for now and all members are invited to join us to observe, comment, or make suggestions.

Angelina Reyes
BAY AREA LEAGUE DAY

Solving for Housing: League Day 2022

When Bay Area League Day 2022 convenes on February 19, it will take a holistic look at land-use planning involved in placing housing. We will be looking at the intersectionality of housing with climate change and natural hazard planning, and the financial implications of housing placement.

The event is likely to be offered in the "hybrid" fashion we are becoming used to, with attending-in-person or via on-line remote connection options. Further information on the in-person location will be available as arrangements are made at https://my.lwv.org/california/bay-area-league/event/solving-housing-league-day-2022.

New Addition to Fremont Housing Mix Coming in the Form of Cohousing

The crisis in Bay Area housing continues to be a front-burner issue as we enter 2022. Bay Area League Day in February will focus on land-use planning involved in placing housing. In Fremont, a group called Mission Peak Cohousing Village has just completed the essential first step in implementing a creative approach to sustainability and reduced cost-of-living expense.

“The Bay Area housing affordability crisis is changing single-family home ownership as residents explore variations on the dream, turning to creative solutions like cohousing that offer community and cost-of-living advantages,” wrote Cecily O’Connor in the League’s Bay Area Monitor of August/September 2019.

Mission Peak Cohousing Village recently completed the purchase of a 1.23-acre parcel of land in the Irvington district of Fremont on which to build Fremont’s first cohousing community. Although the group hopes to be able to include affordable housing in its condominium development, most of the units will be individually owned market-rate homes. Extensive shared resources and amenities—such as environmentally sustainable design, shared space for a garden, play area, outdoor dining space, guest accommodations, a workshop, etc.—is where residents typically realize ongoing savings. Cohousing communities almost always feature a common house with large kitchen and dining area in which to share meals three or four times a week. Community members can design the common house to suit other functions as well—perhaps including child care, entertainment space, laundry facilities, music room, homework and work-from-home office space.

A distinctive aspect of cohousing developments is that the community of residents forms before the buildings are built. The future residents hire the architect and participate actively in designing the
community to fit its own needs and values, emphasizing collaborative settings where people get to know and support each other.

“We will start working with our architect in February to layout the site and design our new community,” points out League member Evelyn LaTorre, one of the first to join Mission Peak. “We are very excited about having secured a site in a quiet residential area that will be within walking distance of the new BART station, Irvington Farmers Market, stores and services, as well as near Fremont Main library, medical facilities, and Central Park. I foresee less dependence on driving.”

Though many of the proposed units are spoken for, Mission Peak is still accepting “Explorers.” The group has scheduled walking tours of the site and vicinity for December 29 and January 16, with informational sessions interspersed. Those who join the group as Explorers by mid-January can participate in a series of workshops with cohousing pioneer Katie McCamant to learn the timelines, financing, and other steps to the project’s completion, expected in 2024. For more information, see www.missionpeakcohousing.org or call Jane Mueller at 510-792-4173.

The Untapped Power Of Young Voters

At our enlightening forum on November 22, an audience of 35 learned of the research and work that has been undertaken to address the historically low voter registration and turnout rates among citizens in the 18-29 age group.

Claire Zhu, a senior at Evergreen Valley High School in San Jose, said that last year, as her older sister became eligible to vote, the question arose among her peers about whether the youth vote really has any impact. The 18-29 age group has historically low turnout rates. Claire designed a research project to satisfy her own desire to learn the answer to two questions:

1. If the youth vote increased by its potential 50 million in presidential elections, would it have an impact on the outcome?
2. What are some solutions to increase the youth voter rate?

Claire’s very impressive data and her analysis demonstrated that there is indeed substantial untapped power in voting by the youngest segment of the voting public.

Following up on Claire’s proposed solutions, Julie Dunkle, a member of LWVFNUC and the co-founder of the highly successful Youth Voter Movement (YVM), spoke about the solution that she and
her son Michael have developed. YVM serves as a model for communities to increase voter registration and voter engagement among youth. YVM has registered more than 7,000 high school students in the Tri-cities area by involving youth themselves in the process.

A recording of both Claire and Julie’s presentations is available to view on the LWVFNUC website.

LWVFNUC Will Join with Neighboring Leagues to Conduct Legislative Interviews in January

Our League and the San Jose/Santa Clara League will be conducting interviews in January with State Senator Bob Wieckowski and Assemblymember Alex Lee. We will also join with the Eden Area League to interview Assemblymember Bill Quirk.

The League of Women Voters of California asks its member Leagues to conduct interviews with their State Senators and Assemblymembers annually. Local League legislative interviews present an opportunity for us to connect with our district representatives, enhance our League’s visibility, and heighten our collective impact. Like LWVFNUC, most Leagues share territory with another League for Senate and Assembly representation.

This year, the three areas of interest that the questions will cover are water, mental health, and redistricting. The actual questions and background material are sent to local Leagues in early December in order to give us time to set up the interview dates, review the background material, and formulate specific questions applicable to each local League.

The interview team will report on the results of these interviews in the March/April Voter. For more information feel free to contact Alex Starr, apstarr@ix.netcom.com.

League’s Alameda County Council Focuses on Oversight of Sheriff’s Office and County Redistricting

The Alameda County Council of the League of Women Voters has been advocating strongly for establishment of a community sheriff oversight board in Alameda County, as well as an office of the inspector general. The County is in the process of implementing AB1185, which authorized counties to establish these entities. The League’s Alameda County Council urged members to provide input at the hearings in mid-December. The Council also sent a letter to the Board of Supervisors outlining the following components to be incorporated into the Alameda County ordinance.

1) Oversight should include both an Inspector General and an Oversight Board
2) Ordinance should provide for a Selection Panel
3) Independent Legal Counsel is essential
4) Adequate resources are critical:
5) Scope of oversight should be specified
6) Oversight Board’s responsibilities for meetings, reports and community input should be specific.

In other advocacy, the Council has been observing closely County redistricting hearings. The five members of the Board of Supervisors (BOS) currently select their own district boundaries, unlike the State of California, which has an independent citizens commission of 14 California residents who draw the district boundaries for the US House of Representatives, and the State Legislature. By law, district lines may not be drawn to protect incumbency or to empower political parties. By election elections code, “Communities of Interest” should be included within a single supervisorial district for purposes of effective and fair representation.

Alameda County’s BOS wields significant power, particularly in our unincorporated communities, where they serve as the municipal government. In the most recent fiscal year, Alameda County’s budget was $3.6 billion. Unincorporated areas contribute additional revenue to the County budget inasmuch as their sales and property taxes are not shared with city governments. A recent review of former Supervisors, however, indicates that few, if any, have ever been elected from the unincorporated areas of the County.

**Why Be a Member of the League of Women Voters?**

At this time of year, many of us voice thanks and call to mind the shared experiences we value. We also look ahead to the new year and resolve to invest our time wisely. Being a member of the League offers that kind of opportunity.

Joining the League gets you involved in your community and enables you to play an active role in our democracy. We work year-round to register new voters, host community forums and debates, and provide voters with election information they need. We engage at the local, state, and national levels on legislative priorities and efforts to improve our elections and protect our democracy. Never has there been a better time to invest our time this way!

Membership Chair Alex Starr offers a few reasons of her own: “Being a League member helps me honor my immigrant father’s wish for me to vote as an informed citizen of this democratic republic. I never miss an opportunity to vote. Furthermore, as a member of the League, I am helping to educate voters by offering non-partisan information on election issues in forums and online. Thanks to the League Observers, who report the meetings of locally elected public officials, I am able to share insights with others about how our government really works.”
Becoming a member the League of Women Voters of Fremont, Newark, and Union City and sharing the benefits is a great way to start the new year. Visit our website at lwvfnuc.org and click the link to Join/Renew.

January & February Dates to Remember

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 1</td>
<td>League Holiday Celebration</td>
<td>Noon</td>
<td>Fremont Central Park at Palms Pavilion behind Aqua Adventure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>New Years Day in the Park</td>
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<td>January 20</td>
<td>Board Meeting</td>
<td>6-8 PM</td>
<td>Zoom</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>Program Planning</td>
<td>10:30 AM to</td>
<td>Zoom</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>noon</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 17</td>
<td>Board Meeting</td>
<td>6-8 PM</td>
<td>Zoom</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 19</td>
<td>Bay Area League Day</td>
<td>10 AM</td>
<td>Probably hybrid—virtual and in-person. Refer to <a href="https://my.lwv.org/california/bay-area-league/event/solving-housing-league-day-2022">https://my.lwv.org/california/bay-area-league/event/solving-housing-league-day-2022</a></td>
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Note:
The LWVFNUC Board meeting schedule is the third Thursday of each month from 6:00 to 8:00 pm. Meetings are currently held via Zoom. All members are welcome to attend.