

EMPOWERED VOICES

Women Democrats of Sacramento County

Issue 10 – Tenth Edition



April - June 2025



It is Time for Democrats to Stand United Against Trump

By Debbie Richardson

As America approaches another pivotal election, we must remember one fundamental truth: this nation was founded in defiance of kings. We chose democracy over dictatorship, accountability over absolute power. Yet today, with Donald Trump's increasingly authoritarian rhetoric and open disdain for checks and balances, the shadow of tyranny threatens to stretch across our republic. Donald Trump has shown he does not revere the presidency as a public trust. He treats it as a throne, speaking as if laws do not apply to him, undermining the justice system, threatening political enemies, and hinting at a government where he rules unchecked.

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Message FROM THE PRESIDENT

Ms. Sandra Hazel

A Visit from Congresswoman Doris Matsui

At our June general meeting, Congresswoman Doris Matsui stopped by for a visit. She spoke about the current issues with the harsh treatment of immigrants in this Country along with the budget Republicans are trying to pass which will be very harmful to millions of children, seniors and veterans who depend on services they are trying to cut. Her message was clear – Democrats need to band together to hold this administration accountable and do everything possible to take back both houses in 2026 so we can put a stop to this regime.

It was an honor to welcome United States Representative Doris Matsui, who shared insightful thoughts and inspired us with her commitment to public service. We want to thank her for her words of encouragement.



Welcome U.S. Representative Doris Matsui

By Debbie Richardson

United States Representative Doris Matsui, representing California's 7th District, was a special guest speaker at the General meeting for the Sacramento Women Democrats. We were honored and excited to hear her speak! Rep. Matsui is a longstanding, influential figure in our community and although petite in stature, she is known for her strong presence and she is packed with plenty of power—always ready and able to fight back against the wiles of the Republicans in Congress!

Rep. Matsui provided members information regarding her previous successes and she thanked everyone for their willingness to get involved and ensuring their voices are heard regarding the injustices of the current presidential administration as it relates to the attempted cuts to Medicaid and more. "We're saying, No more!" said Rep. Matsui to the members of the Sacramento Women Dems. "You're not going to take away our healthcare! You're not going to take away healthcare from our Grandmothers." "We have to get excited! We need more Democrats and we have to stand up together. I assure you that we are fighting in Washington (DC)...and we will be encouraged and fight to win." "This is our country....our families...our democracies." "We have to stand up and make sure this is our country...our democracy. They can't take us down. We are too powerful!"

Rep. Matsui spoke about the No Kings protest at the California State Capitol in Sacramento on June 14, 2025, where over 5000 demonstrators gathered voicing various concerns including opposition to the Trump administration. Rep. Matsui was in attendance and addressed the crowd. "I don't want to leave behind a broken democracy," shouted Rep. Matsui, "Do you?" "No!" they shouted back. She urged participants to voice their opinions at the ballot box, emphasizing the importance of protecting democracy. Various elected officials participated in the protest included Assemblymember Maggie Krell, Councilmember Roger Dickinson, and many others.

Rep. Matsui's presence at the protest was noted in several news reports. Read more at:

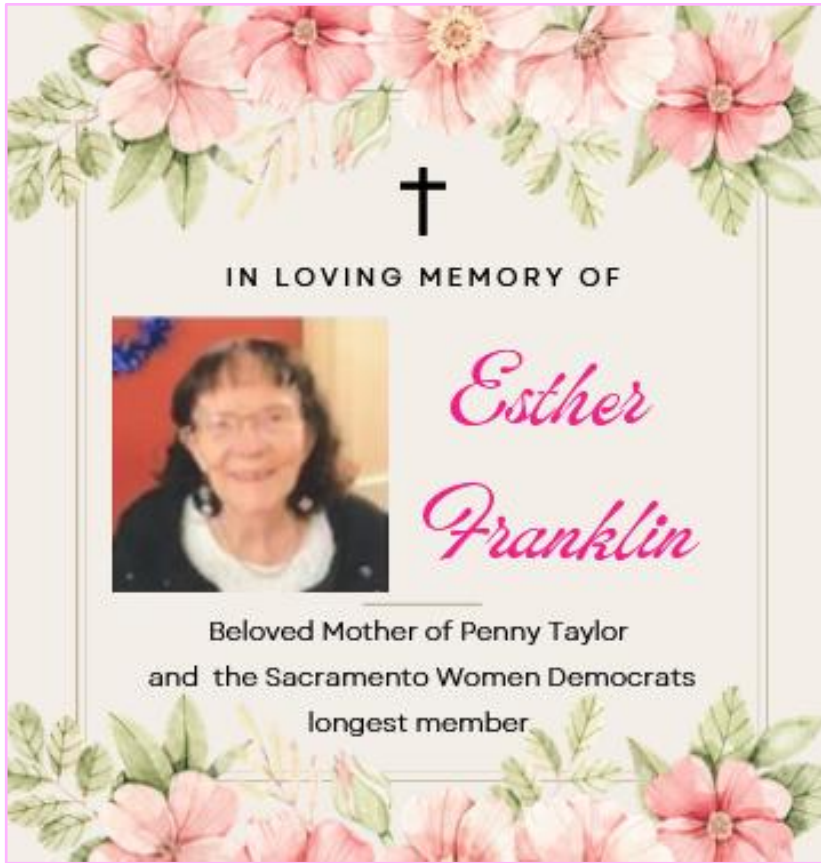
<https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/article308584110.html#storylink=cpy>

For more information regarding Rep. Doris Matsui and her district, visit her website: <https://matsui.house.gov/>.



In Loving Memory of Esther Franklin

Forever in our Hearts



Esther Franklin passed away on May 18, ten weeks before her 100th birthday. She was an educator, librarian, writer, and peace activist. A member of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento (UUSS) for 73 years, Esther was active in the Sunday Forum and Ted's Web discussions along with her late husband, Ben Franklin.

She received a B.A. degree in English from the University of Utah at age 20. She moved to the Bay Area so her first husband, George Stamm, could attend college.

We extend our condolences to her children, Pennie Taylor and Larry Stamm, and her stepchildren, Warren and John Franklin. Esther had three grandchildren and one great grandchild.

A family celebration of her life is planned for the summer. The family invites contributions in her honor to the UUSS Heritage Fund, Women's International for Peace and Freedom or Planned Parenthood.

She held the longest membership for the Sacramento Women Democrats. Esther was a loving mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. We will celebrate her 100th birthday in late July. "Mama Esther really was an inspiring woman to me and so many others," states her daughter, Pennie Taylor. "She marched and worked for labor rights and women's rights. She was an incredible librarian, writer, educator, and peace activist and she was a perfect mother." Our prayers and condolences are with the family of Esther Franklin.

Congratulations!



Oranit Limmaneeprasert is the incoming Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC) President and a long-time professor in the English as a Second Language (ESL) department at American River College. Her two-year term at FACCC began on June 15. "I sometimes have a hard time believing that I earned a PhD in educational psychology from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa," Oranit says. "Born and raised in a traditional Chinese family in a town 350 miles from Bangkok, I was supposed to be seen but not heard and was not expected to receive any education beyond elementary school."

Oranit earned a degree in chemical engineering from a college in Taiwan with the help of scholarships. She taught Mandarin Chinese to her local community and tutored two American consuls and their staff in Thai. This experience led her to work as a Peace Corps language and cultural trainer and later as the director of the Maryknoll Fathers' Thai language and culture school. Oranit has taught at American River College for nearly 25 years, drawing on her experiences as an immigrant and language learner to support and uplift her students. "I am not a typical Chinese or Thai woman...as I learned early in my academic career in the U.S. that I must actively participate in advocacy work to make a difference for those who do not have a voice." She has served on several committees with FACCC and now assumes the presidency. She is also tenured as faculty and union president at American River College and as the president of the Sacramento chapter of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance.

Read the full Q&A with Oranit, [click here](#).

The U.S. Supreme Court--Loyalty in Question

By Teresa Hernandez

Have you ever read a job description that does not have minimum qualifications (MQ's)? Probably not. So, why are there no written MQ's for the highest court of the nation, the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS)? During the 1800's, there weren't many law schools, so some of the original Justices learned the law under a mentor, and/or simply passed the bar without having completed formal education. Currently, however, the Senate has established its own criteria, approving justices with degrees from prestigious law schools, and/or those who have served as judges in the lower courts.

Let's go back to the beginning. The SCOTUS was created with the passing of the Judiciary Act of 1789. Per the Act, members of the Supreme Court are appointed by the U.S. President subject to the approval of the U.S. Senate. Justices may hold their offices, "during good behavior", (meaning for life if they so desire). Currently up to nine justices may serve on the bench. That number can be amended via Congressional approval. That's another issue to discuss for another day.

So, let's talk about "good behavior". The first ever "Code of Conduct of Justices" was released on November 13, 2023, written and signed by the current nine justices after much public controversy regarding justices' ethical behaviors. Review more detailed information here: https://www.supremecourt.gov/about/Code-of-Conduct-for-Justices_November_13_2023.pdf.

The Code addresses issues like the acceptance of gifts, and recusal standards to avoid outside influences and prejudices. However, it does not address the process or the entity responsible for enforcing this Code. Thus, the loophole can easily allow for continued bias affecting critical national decisions made by the Supreme Court.

Although the Congress and Senate have the power to impeach a justice, the outcome in an impeachment proceeding would most likely stem from an arbitrary decision based on which party has the majority of both houses at the time. It wasn't always like this. The current administration has disregarded illegal or unethical issues placing loyalty to political party first.



Pictured above: The Supreme Court Justices: (Front row, L-R) Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Assoc. Justice Clarence Thomas, Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr., Assoc. Justice Samuel A. Alito, Jr., and Assoc. Justice Elena Kagan. (Back row, L-R) Assoc. Justice Amy Coney Barrett, Assoc. Justice Neil M. Gorsuch, Assoc. Justice Brett M. Kavanaugh, and Assoc. Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson. (Credit: Fred Schilling, Collection of the SCOTUS)

It is unfortunate that our highest court no longer appears to make legal decisions based on their Oath to the Constitution, and their Judicial Oath, which, in part, states that they shall "impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent upon me..." In July of 2024, Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY-14D) filed a petition of impeachment against Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito based on their refusal to recuse themselves from certain cases in which they were conflicted, and their failure to report gifts which may be seen/perceived as "bribes". However, it is unlikely to be passed by the Republican-controlled House of Representatives.

Lastly, the question has recently arisen as to whether there should be term limits. If there was a term limit, it would:

- Eliminate a greater chance that a judge in his/her senior years may develop mental or physical problems affecting their ability to adequately perform their duties,
- Make the process of impeachment less of an issue, and
- Prevent the monopolizing of the Supreme Court with justices with a majority of one political party for years to come.

Are there cons? I think we've already seen those.

■ ■ ■



PPIC

**PUBLIC POLICY
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Photos above (L-R): The Honorable Tani Cantil-Sakauye, Mark Baldassare, The Honorable Jeff Gonzalez, The Honorable Judith McConnell, The Honorable Dr. Shirley Weber

By Linda Reed

On June 11, 2025, the [Public Policy Institute of California](https://www.ppic.org/) (PPIC) presented a panel to discuss K-12 and beyond Civic Education in California. After running a survey throughout California in April 2025, the experienced panel discussed the importance of civic education throughout the K-12 experience. Each of the panel members have been involved in the field of Civic Education in various aspects from starting programs for schools and school districts to enhancing student participation, student advocacy and teacher training in civic education in many subject areas.

The distinguished panel members included The Honorable Tani Cantil-Sakauye (PPIC President and former State Supreme Court Justice), Mark Baldassare (Survey Director of PPIC), The Honorable Jeff Gonzalez (California State Assemblymember –AD 36), The Honorable Judith McConnell (Administrative Presiding Justice, Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, and longtime coordinator and advocate of Judicial civic education statewide), and The Honorable Dr. Shirley Weber (California Secretary of State) who was responsible for outreach to high schools and colleges to inform students regarding voting and civic understanding.

Some of the takeaways from the survey and panel discussion were:

1. Civic Education is a high priority for K-12 education although competing with many other educational goals such as teaching the basics and life skills and college preparedness.
2. Public schools are doing a fairly good job of teaching civics according to public school parents.
3. The top priority for teaching Civics is teaching the U.S. Constitution and about elections and registering to vote, also how to detect disinformation and to discuss the pros and cons of varying viewpoints. In addition, many parents thought America's role in the world was important to know about and also the importance of students doing community service.

Civic Education is important in California due to the fact California has the initiative process for many policy decisions at the ballot box. Parents in the study want students to become engaged citizens. This was highest amongst Democrats and Independents. Highest geographical areas of emphasis on civic education were in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the Inland Empire, Orange County, San Diego and Central Valley areas. Continued on page 6

“We live in a time of deep polarization, the importance of understanding basic facts about our government and our democracy should and can unite us all.”

Cantil-Sakauye & Baldassare

It is Time for Democrats to Stand United Against Trump

Continued from page 1

This is not strength—it is the beginning of despotism. We cannot afford to sleepwalk into an era of American authoritarianism.

Now is the moment for Democrats to rise—not as factions or scattered voices, but as one determined coalition. The time for handwringing is over. The stakes are too high. Democracy itself is on the ballot.

Democrats must come together with clarity, urgency, and a plan. This means articulating a bold vision for the future—not just resistance to Trump, but a clear alternative that motivates voters: protect voting rights, restore the rule of law, fight economic inequality, and safeguard reproductive freedom and civil liberties. Unity, message discipline, and grassroots organizing must be the pillars of the Democratic response.

We don't need a king. We need a government of the people, by the people, for the people. The Democratic Party must lead that charge—or risk being remembered not as the party that fought back, but the one that let democracy slip away. ■

Public Policy Institute of California

Continued from page 5

Many community college students were in attendance. One of the interesting quotes of the day from Baldassare was his statement: “Democracy is not a spectator sport.” Another interesting moment was when Dr. Weber shared her story about growing up in a household in Los Angeles where her family's living room became the voting place for her neighborhood during elections due to her mother's understanding of the importance of civic participation. As a former Civics teacher, I am glad I attended this event to hear about the future of Civics Education. ■



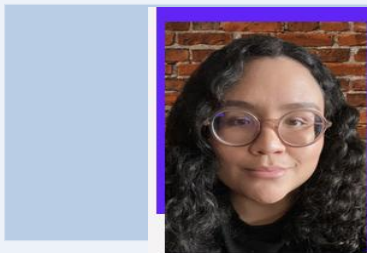
STAND UP.

STEP UP.

THE TIME IS NOW.



WOMEN DEMS 2025 SPEAKERS SERIES



GISELLE GARCIA
Organizer
NorCal Resist



CARMEN NICOLE COX
Director of
Governmental Affairs,
ACLU Cal Action



KISHWER VIKAAAS
County of Sacramento
Public Defender's Office

Featured Speakers at Women Democrats General Meetings

April - Giselle Garcia, an Organizer from [NorCal Resist](#), is a first-generation Latina college and law school graduate striving to transform systems of power yielding oppressive influence over the lives of the marginalized. She is a community organizer and advocate for undocumented and incarcerated neighbors focused on the goal of achieving true autonomy for the disenfranchised.

May - Carmen Nicole Cox, the Director of Governmental Affairs for the [ACLU California Action](#), provided invaluable information regarding the activities of the ACLU and their fight against the current presidential administration's efforts to uphold illegal tactics against immigration. She was previously Chief Counsel of Public Policy and Advocacy for the United Way California Capital Region, and she was an adjunct professor at McGeorge School of Law where she taught Race, Mass Incarceration and Criminal Justice Reform. A self-described liberation attorney, Cox has spent nearly a decade focusing on criminal justice reform, including positions as Deputy Director at For The People, Deputy Legal Affairs Secretary for Governor Jerry Brown, Chief of Legislation at the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, and Deputy District Attorney in San Joaquin County.

June - Kishwer Vikaas is a California State Bar Certified Law Specialist in Immigration and Nationality Law. She currently works at the Sacramento County Public Defender's Office. Previously, she was a Staff Attorney and Adjunct Professor at University of Pacific, McGeorge School of Law Legal Clinics. Prior to that, she practiced immigration law at Opening Doors, a nonprofit serving refugees and survivors of human trafficking. Kishwer graduated with a BA in English and a JD from Temple University. She currently services as President of the Asian/Pacific Bar Association of Sacramento.



Also, we give very special thanks and heartfelt appreciation to Mrs. Tahira Saadat for sharing her moving and inspirational story about her journey from Afghanistan to America.

If you have a recommendation for a speaker, please contact Debbie Richardson at Sacramentowomendems@gmail.com.

Volunteers are needed for the Women Dems!

We are Sacramento's oldest democratic club and we are asking for your help, donations, and time. Volunteers are needed to:



- Write Postcards to registered voters
- Assist with voter Registration/GOTV
- "Man" tables at community events
- Donate items to Silent Auction (Ice Cream Social)
- Assist with phone banking for our endorsed candidates
- Host actions/events
- Canvass/Door walking
- Assist with Social Media or Member Meetings
- Donate \$25 or more monthly for 2025
- Join a Committee
- Become a Sponsor

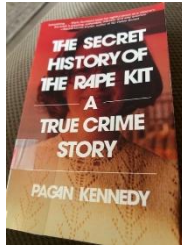
Sounds interesting? Email SacramentoWomenDems@gmail.com to help. Thank you!

Book Review

By Annette Emery

The Secret History of the Rape Kit: A True Crime Story

Written by Pagen Kennedy



The world of crime investigation has seen profound transformations over the decades, but few innovations have been as impactful as the introduction of the rape kit. This seemingly simple collection of tools has revolutionized the handling of cases involving sexual assault, shining a light on dark corners of justice where survivors were once overlooked or doubted. However, the story behind its creation is one of resilience, cultural barriers, and the audacious courage of individuals who dared to defy societal norms.

I heard about the book, "The Secret History of the Rape Kit: A True Crime Story," on the National Public Radio program and it is an incredible and well written important piece of history. The author, Pagen Kennedy, one day wondered who had invented the rape kit and upon googling this, she discovered that it was a male police officer from Chicago. She questioned this information since police officers, especially men in the early 1970s, typically assumed that women were lying about being raped. Ms. Kennedy did more research and discovered that a woman named Marty Goddard had put together the first rape kits but allowed a man's name to be used as the inventor so that it would be accepted into the dominantly male police culture.

Marty Goddard (pictured right) designed the first kit and educated hospital staff and police on how to use it. Before the rape kit, there was no methodology to create a case. Police manuals stated that generally women were lying and it was up to each police officer to decide whether to pursue a case. Marty Goddard changed the view of rape--from women lying about being raped...to a case that could be proved.



Then, unexpectedly, Marty Goddard disappeared. Ms. Kennedy goes through the history of the rape kit and includes information about other groups of women who are working to ensure that sexual assault is a crime and to help advocate for rape survivors who are treated as criminals. This is a captivating and gripping read from start to finish.

■ ■ ■

California Legislation

In California, 2025 legislation concerning rape involves amendments to existing laws and new measures for survivors. Specifically, SB 258 eliminates the spousal exception from the definition of rape, and AB 250, which revives certain claims related to sexual assault, will be effective for a limited period. Additionally, there are laws concerning safe spaces for survivors and expanded coverage for medical treatment following sexual assault.

- [SB 258, Wahab. Crimes: rape](#)

This bill amends California Penal Code section 261 to remove the spousal exception from the definition of rape. This means that sexual intercourse without consent, even within marriage, can be prosecuted as rape. The bill also clarifies legal definitions related to "duress" and "menace".

- [AB 250: Aguiar-Curry. Sexual assault: statute of limitations](#)

This bill allows for the revival of certain legal claims related to sexual assault that may have been previously barred. The revived claims must allege that the plaintiff was sexually assaulted and that one or more entities are legally responsible for damages arising from the assault, and that those entities engaged in a cover-up or attempted cover-up of previous allegations. This law is effective for a limited time, from January 1, 2026, to December 31, 2027.

- [SB 841: Rubio. Immigration enforcement](#)

This bill aims to protect places like rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters, and homeless shelters, ensuring that fear of reporting does not prevent survivors from seeking help.

- [Cervantes, Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Denim Day](#)

SR 14, relative to Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Denim Day, was passed by the Senate, highlighting the importance of addressing sexual assault and promoting awareness.

- [AB 379, as amended, Schultz. Crimes: prostitution](#)

This bill aims to combat prostitution by making loitering with intent to purchase commercial sex a misdemeanor. It also applies felony penalties to those who solicit minors for sex and establishes a fund to support sex trafficking victims. Assm. Krell is co-author.



Ice Cream Social with a Glass – 2025



Please join us for our annual Ice Cream Social to raise funds for candidates. Our theme this year is “Now More Than Ever.” We’ve seen what the current administration is capable of doing and **Now More Than Ever** we need to join together to elect the candidates who will fight for us!

Date: Monday - July 21, 2025

Time: 5:30pm to 7:30 pm

Location:

Sierra 2 Center, Curtis Hall & Courtyard
2791 24th Street, Sacramento 95818

Cost of Tickets:

- \$25 members ice cream only ■ \$30 non-members ice cream only
- \$35 members ice cream and wine ■ \$40 non-members ice cream and wine

Ticket & Donation [Link:](https://secure.actblue.com/donate/wdscicecream2025) <https://secure.actblue.com/donate/wdscicecream2025>

The Mission of the Women Democrats of Sacramento County is to get women elected and impact social change by redefining the role of women in politics while advocating for equity, justice, and economic advancement.

“We are living through historic times and there is so much happening on all fronts,” states Women Dems President Sandra Hazel. “At WDSC, we have been continuing to work, to educate and to engage. Our goals have stayed the same: to get women elected and impact social change by redefining the role of women in politics. We depend on our iconic Ice Cream Social to fill our coffers so we can in turn support our endorsed candidates. As always, 100% of the proceeds from this event go toward supporting local candidates and legislation.”

QR Code



We have several levels of sponsorships available:

- **Champagne: \$1,000** includes top recognition at the event, reserved table for 10
- **Cabernet: \$500** includes recognition at the event and 6 tickets for ice cream and wine
- **Chardonnay: \$350** includes recognition at the event and 4 tickets for ice cream and wine
- **Chablis: \$200** includes recognition at the event and 2 tickets for ice cream and wine

Thank you very much if you have been a past sponsor and supporter. For the new sponsors and supporters, we welcome you to the cause. We cannot do this without you! If you have any questions, contact the Sacramento Women Democrats at Sacramentowomendems@gmail.com.



WOMEN DEMOCRATS OF SACRAMENTO COUNTY

www.sacramentowomendems.org

sacramentowomendems@gmail.com



Please join the

Women Democrats of Sacramento County

Not a Member? JOIN NOW!

General Membership - \$35 per year

Students and Seniors - \$30 per year

VIP Membership - \$50

Be a part of Sacramento's oldest political club!

Women Democrats of Sacramento County

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Editorial Disclaimer - The opinions, beliefs, and viewpoints expressed in articles published by *Empowered Voices* do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs, and viewpoints or the official policies of the Women Democrats of Sacramento County.

Women Democrats of Sacramento County Executive Committee

The Women Dems' elected officers, directors and members-at-large are committed to enhancing the cause of democracy within the County of Sacramento, the State of California and beyond. They are hardworking volunteers and share a passion to enhance the Women Dems' organization and mission.

Officers

Sandra Hazel (President), Debbie Richardson (Vice-President), Julie Chapman (Treasurer), Dawn Basciano (Secretary), Sue Litsey (Membership), Brenda Borge (Political Affairs) Ariane Lyon (Fundraising), Linda Reed, Eric Wiensenthal and Delores Roberts (Members at Large)

Newsletter Committee –

Debbie Richardson, Editor-in-Chief

