



Clean Water Is A Human Right, Not A Privilege An interview with Laurel Firestone, Co-director of the Community Water Center

At our 2014 Annual Meeting, FCLCA's General Committee members established three priority areas for our legislative work during the 2015-2016 session: reforming California's criminal justice system, promoting economic justice through efforts to reduce poverty and income inequality, and supporting bills that address environmental justice.

As we all know, water is a central theme for our state, and Central Valley communities in particular feel the effects of water shortages and pollution. To learn more, we interviewed Laurel Firestone, co-director of the Community Water Center (CWC) based in Tulare County, and one of California's leading environmental justice organizations. Driven by a mission to ensure that all communities have access to safe, clean and affordable water, CWC works on multiple levels through community organizing, education and policy development, and direct advocacy in Sacramento to create community-drive water solutions in California's San Joaquin Valley.

Laurel, what are the key environmental issues in terms of safe drinking water in the communities where you work?

The San Joaquin Valley is the center of California's growing drinking water crisis. Five of its eight counties – Fresno, Madera, Merced, Kern, Kings, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare – have some of the highest rates of



water contamination per person in the state. We know that contaminated drinking water causes many adverse human health effects, including gastrointestinal illnesses, nervous or reproductive system impacts, and chronic diseases such as cancer.

Nitrate contamination of drinking water is widespread and increasing in California. In the San Joaquin Valley, the largest sources of nitrate pollution are chemical fertilizer applications and manure produced at immense confined animal feeding operations throughout the region.

How does CWC work to address these issues?

We've determined that we can be most effective by working simultaneously in three ways:

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"The Friends Committee on Legislation of California (FCLCA), guided by Quaker values, advocates for California state laws that are just, compassionate and respectful of the inherent worth of every person."



Members of AGUA at the State Capitol

- By educating, organizing and providing legal assistance to the people who are most directly affected: low-income communities of color facing local water challenges.
- By advocating for systemic change to address the root causes of unsafe drinking water in the San Joaquin Valley. We opened an office here in Sacramento in 2012 to work directly with legislators to help shape and advocate for state water policies.
- By serving as a resource for information and expertise on community water challenges.

In terms of specific legislation and policy on a state level, what are your priorities?

In 2012, CWC supported the passage of AB 685, a groundbreaking policy that established a legal foundation for the human right to water in California, one of the first states in the US to do so. This leg-

islation has provided a framework for much of the work that we do.

This past year, CWC was a strong advocate for Proposition 1, the Water Bond, which passed in November 2014 to authorize over \$7 billion in general obligation bonds for state water supply infrastructure projects, with at least \$696 million allocated for safe drinking water and clean water programs in disadvantaged communities. This legislative session CWC is advocating for a number of policies that have implications for small, rural and low-income communities. CWC is supporting SB 20, introduced by Senator Pavley, which would make well completion reports ("well logs") publicly available. This bill would aid in more effective and sustainable groundwater management. CWC is also supporting Senator Lara's SB 208, which helps disadvantaged communities and non-profits secure grants to implement integrated regional water management (IRWM) projects. CWC is

supporting Assembly Member Rendon's AB 496 and Senator Leyva's SB 334, which both address unsafe drinking water issues in schools, a current area of research at CWC. Other bills CWC is supporting include AB 401, AB 615, AB 1071, and AB 156. We'll continue to follow and advocate for these bills as well as others relevant to community water access, and ensure that the needs of small, rural, and low-income communities are being addressed.

How will the implementation of Prop 1, the Water Bond, affect the people of the San Joaquin Valley and the environmental justice issues there?

Prop 1 provides \$520 million for safe drinking water and clean water programs for small, disadvantaged communities. These funds are designed to leverage federal funds and pay for community wastewater programs and drinking water infrastructure. Prop 1 provides \$900 million for groundwater sustainability projects, 10 percent of which is set aside for severely disadvantaged communities. Plans for the actual implementation of this funding are still ongoing, and CWC is helping to connect communities with these resources. Drinking water contamination and inadequate clean water supply are central issues in the San Joaquin Valley, and California's ongoing drought has only made the situation worse. This funding will be vital for communities in the

Valley, and across the state, for addressing their immediate and long-term water issues. Prop 1 funding has been allocated specifically for urgent public health-

At least 1 million Californians lack access to safe drinking water in their own homes, neighborhoods, or schools.

related drinking water needs, such as emergency bottled water, as well as longer-term solutions such as water treatment, water system upgrades, and groundwater management projects.



Could you share some stories of how people's organized action made a difference?

Since opening its doors in 2006, CWC has worked with local residents from 82 California communities (69 in the southern San Joaquin Valley) to improve access to safe, clean, and affordable water. CWC has trained over 2,674 residents as clean water advocates and provided

technical assistance to over 15 local water boards struggling with how to manage efficient and accountable water systems in their communities. CWC has also served as legal counsel to a number of small, disadvantaged communities with water systems. As a result, many rural, economically disadvantaged communities in the San Joaquin Valley now have improved access to clean and affordable drinking water.

CWC coordinates the coalition Asociación de Gente Unida por el Agua (AGUA), which is comprised of representatives of more than 17 local impacted communities and six nonprofit organizations, as well as youth

and community-based organizations. AGUA mobilizes residents to participate in critical actions, events, and opportunities to address and develop long-term solutions for the drinking water crisis in the Central Valley. AGUA has also engaged in interim projects, such as in August of 2014, when Community

Water Center and AGUA Coalition members helped Tulare County employees deliver emergency bottled water to Monson, a community severely impacted by the drought and contamination.

In January 2015, the California Endowment, Rural Community Assistance Corporation, Pueblo Unido CDC, and the Community Water Center came together to launch the Agua4All Initiative

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in South Kern and East Coachella. The project brings 120 water stations to public spaces, such as schools, libraries, and community centers, in regions where many residents do not have access to safe, clean, affordable drinking water.

In the city of Arvin, for example, residents have struggled with arsenic contaminated drinking water for over a decade. Residents are unable to drink water from the tap, and can't even cook with their water due to high levels of arsenic, which is known to cause cancer. Arvin's water comes primarily from wells that were found in the state's 2012 EPA compliance report to be in violation of maximum contaminant level standards for arsenic. These community residents pay their water bills, and on top of that many are spending up to 10 percent of their income on bottled water. At least 1 million Californians, lack access to safe drinking water in their own homes, neighborhoods, or schools.

This April, Agua4All will have completed close to 40 installations of water fountains and water bottle filling stations to public community sites. New water stations have been recently installed at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Kern County in Lamont, and at Lamont School District elementary and middle schools.

CWC led the coordination and facilitation of a diverse stakeholder group of local community and state agencies to guide the four Tulare Lake Basin Counties (Kern, Tulare, Kings and Fresno) in the development of a regional plan for disadvantaged community (DACs) drinking water and wastewater needs.

The project has created a comprehensive database of more than 500 unincorporated communities reaching over 700 stakeholders in the four-county region, and identified their water and wastewater needs. Nearly 200 of these communities lack any type of centralized or regulated drinking water system. The project used the priorities identified by the stakeholder group to develop pilot studies that guided the development of a comprehensive plan for the region. The final plan is now complete and was released in September 2014, along with the database of unincorporated communities. The three-year study provides concrete recommendations to ensure safe drinking water and effective



wastewater treatment for disadvantaged communities. We're working to foster implementation of the Study recommendations at all levels, local, regional and state.

How can faith-based advocacy organizations like FCLCA and individuals concerned about environmental justice help?

Faith-based advocacy organizations and individuals concerned about environmental justice can get involved by raising awareness on water issues and by taking action on legislation that addresses water issues in disadvantaged communities. Organizations and individuals can also support the policy advocacy and community organizing work of grassroots non-profit organizations, such as CWC, through donations, sponsorships and in-kind contributions. [FCLCA](#)

Find out more about the Community Water Center

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Communities In Action for Clean Water

Tonyville, CA – Getting information in Spanish and finding a year-round safe water source

Tonyville is a community of approximately 400 farm workers, most of whom are primarily Spanish speaking. Tonyville is about a mile from the City of Lindsay. Residents are served water by the Lindsay Strathmore Irrigation District, which usually provides treated surface water from the Friant-Kern Canal. However, during the few months each year when the canal does not have surface water, the community must rely on its own groundwater wells, both of which are contaminated with nitrate above the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL), and now may be contaminated with perchlorate. Residents have also received notices that disinfectant by-products, such as trihalo-methanes, have been detected over legal limits in the water supplied from the surface water treatment plant.

A number of families were concerned about their water and did not know how to find out if their water was safe. The emergency water notices that arrived to the houses were only in English so the many Spanish-speaking households were not sure what the notices were saying. No one remembered receiving Consumer Confidence Reports nor did they know where their drinking water came from.

After a number of meetings in the yard of a local church, the group created a community association

called La Voz de Tonyville, and wrote a letter to the water provider requesting copies of the most recent source water assessment and Consumer Confidence Report in both English and Spanish. The system provided a Consumer Confidence Report in English and Spanish and the group began to learn that the system regularly relied on nitrate contaminated wells for the months of the year that surface water was not available.



The group then enlisted the help of a local non-profit advocacy organization, which wrote to the Department of Public Health (DPH) requesting information on why the system was regularly

allowed to provide unsafe water. The DPH issued a Cease and Desist Order to the Lindsay-Strathmore Irrigation District, requiring them to develop a safe year-round supply and not continue to rely regularly on contaminated wells. The system is currently developing a storage facility for the community to ensure that a reliable supply of surface water is available year-round. [FCLCA](#)

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Sacramento in the Springtime: The Legislature and FCLCA get to work

Themes emerge for 2015-2016 session

Several key themes are emerging for FCLCA as the 2015-2016 legislative session takes shape. Despite being a very wealthy state and the world's eighth largest economy, California has extraordinarily high rates of poverty. Using the supplemental poverty measure (a broader measure than the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) that takes into account items like childcare and medical expenses as well as benefits received), approximately one in four California residents lives in poverty. The rate is slightly higher for children. While our state's economy has improved significantly since the Great Recession, wage growth remains stagnant. People in marginalized communities that were the most impacted have seen little improvement. Reducing mass incarceration and reducing prison spending remains an FCLCA priority. Numerous bills have been introduced to rein in the use of excessive force by law enforcement. The Legislature is also embarking on ambitious new efforts to mitigate the worst effects of global warming.

The Funding Paradox: higher revenues could mean cuts to social services

Policy committee hearings for bills introduced in 2015 began in mid-March as did budget hearings, though most major budget decisions will be made in May when the state has a better idea of how much tax revenue will be received and caseload projections are updated. Despite the Brown administration's conservative revenue forecasts, Democratic lawmakers were feeling optimistic about restoring the severe cuts made to the state's safety net since the Great Recession.

But a new report by the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) has tempered that optimism. The report concludes that due to Proposition 98, the voter-approved initiative that guarantees funding for schools and community colleges (and to a lesser degree due to Proposition 2, which voters passed in 2014 to create a new Rainy Day Fund), safety net

programs may be subjected to additional cuts in the 2015-2016 fiscal year, which begins July 1. This paradox stems from the fact that Proposition 98 links funding for schools and community colleges (K-14) to state revenue collections rather than the overall condition of the state's budget.

When revenue collections increase in the current fiscal year (2014-2015), they automatically trigger additional K-14 spending in the next fiscal year (2015-2016). Moreover, the new spending level becomes the basis of future spending levels. So while state revenue collections are surging in the current fiscal year and will increase K-14 spending considerably, revenues may not be as robust in the 2015-2016 fiscal year. Thus, as a result of Proposition 98's "escalator effect," revenue growth in 2015-2016 may not be sufficient to fully absorb the increased spending generated by this year's surge in tax collections.

The LAO report also opines that the budget problem will likely be modest and nothing like the shortfalls our state experienced in the wake of the Great Recession. But the dilemma is perplexing. While everyone favors increased spending for schools and community colleges, increases in state revenues should also help to restore the state's safety net, which has suffered \$15 billion in spending cuts since 2008 and has resulted in considerable harm to our state's most vulnerable residents.

A similar dilemma confounds the budget for corrections, which the governor has proposed increasing to \$10 billion in 2015-2016 despite the fact that the prison population has decreased significantly. The request for increased funding stems from the addition of new prison beds, both infill beds at existing prisons and new contract beds that have come on line in order to reduce prison overcrowding; increases in prison health care costs as ordered by the federal receiver; and the fact that new prison guards need to be hired due to a large wave of retirements.

Progress on criminal justice reform

With regards to criminal justice, public opinion is shifting away from the tough on crime, “lock em up and throw away the key” mentality of the 1980s and 1990s. In 2012, voters amended California’s harsh “three strikes” law so that in most instances a 25-year to life sentence can only be triggered by a conviction for a serious or violent felony. Last November voters also approved Proposition 47, to reduce drug possession and small property crimes from a felony to a misdemeanor. Both have had significant effects on prison overcrowding, which is now below the court-ordered mandate of 137.5 of capacity. However, the federal three-judge panel has also called for a durable and lasting solution, which will require the Legislature to codify population reduction measures into law. Not surprisingly, passage of Proposition 47 has also prompted some legislative blowback from law enforcement and there remains little political will in Sacramento for reforming California’s convoluted sentencing scheme.

What follows is a discussion of some key bills that FCLCA is tracking in the new session. We encourage you to sign up for FCLCA Action Alerts and

to check the Action Center on the FCLCA Website (www.fclca.org) to keep abreast of these and other bills.

Bills You Should Know About

Criminal Justice

California’s abnormally high recidivism rates – nearly two-thirds of prisoners released from prison return within three years – is a major driver of prison overcrowding. “Milestone” programs that are completed while people are still incarcerated, such as a community college degree, a vocational certificate, or a substance abuse program, have a proven track record of reducing recidivism. **AB 512**, by Mark Stone (D-Santa Cruz) and co-sponsored by FCLCA, increases the sentence reduction credit that prisoners can earn for completing a milestone program from six weeks to 18 weeks per year. The bill makes exceptions for people convicted of violent sex offenses, people sentenced under the state’s “three strikes” law and persons serving terms for certain violent and serious felonies. These groups are covered under state laws passed by voter initiatives and credit earning cannot be

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Our Community Celebrates Voices of Conscience



On March 29, 2015, the Northern California community of FCLCA gathered for a benefit dinner to recognize and celebrate three “Voices of Conscience:” former Assembly Member Tom Ammiano; Christina Mansfield and her organization CIVIC; and our newest board member, Ellen Eggers. Tom Ammiano was honored for his leadership in the Legislature on solitary confinement, sentencing reform and reducing wrongful convictions. Christina Mansfield and CIVIC

were recognized for their work to end the isolation of men and women in U.S. immigration detention, and Ellen Eggers for her work to end the death penalty and exonerate the innocent. Ellen also spoke about her decision to join the Legacy Circle and stressed the importance of making planned gifts so that our work may continue for decades. [FCLCA](#)



*L to R: Ellen Eggers, FCLCA Legislative Director
Jim Lindburg, Christina Mansfield, Tom Ammiano*

increased without triggering a two-thirds supermajority vote requirement. **AB 512** will help improve public safety and reduce the prison population. The bill passed its first hearing in the Assembly Public Safety Committee by a vote of 5-2.

FCLCA is also co-sponsoring **AB 926**, by Reginald Jones-Sawyer (D-Los Angeles), to create a parole credit earning system. Research demonstrates that persons who complete their first year of parole with no violations or rearrests are far less likely to recidivate in their second or third year on parole. This bill provides that persons under parole supervision will earn one month towards being discharged from parole for each month they comply with the terms of their parole. The Department of Finance would be required to calculate the dollar savings. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) would employ the savings to provide grants for job training and housing supports for people on parole. Parole agents would benefit from lower caseloads and could better supervise those who need more intensive supervision. The bill passed the Assembly Public Safety Committee by a vote of 5-2.

AB 512 will help improve public safety and reduce the prison population

SB 759, by Joel Anderson (R-El Cajon) and Loni Hancock (D-Berkeley), sponsored by FCLCA and the American Friends Service Committee, requires the CDCR to collect specified data related to Security Housing Units. The Inspector General would be required to assemble the data and prepare biennial reports to the Legislature. We anticipate that the bill will be heard in committee in late April.

FCLCA is also working in support of **SB 382**, by Ricardo Lara (D-Bell Gardens). This bill would enable judges to review and reverse a prosecutor's decision to charge a juvenile as an adult and remand the case back to juvenile court. In California, youth as young as 14 may be tried as adults, and thousands of teens, especially youth of color, have been lost to the adult criminal system. The bill also expands the criteria for determining whether a young person would benefit from being adjudicated in the juvenile justice system to include several hallmark characteristics of youth such as the defendant's age and their capacity for rehabilitation. FCLCA sup-

ports **SB 124**, by Mark Leno (D-San Francisco). This bill would prohibit the use of solitary confinement as punishment for juveniles in detention and allows it only for very limited circumstances and for very short durations.

Several other noteworthy criminal justice bills supported by FCLCA include **SB 224**, by Carol Liu (D-Los Angeles), which expands eligibility for elder parole, and **SB 219**, also by Carol Liu, which requires CDCR to create a specified timeline when processing applications for female prisoners to participate in the Alternative Custody Program (ACP). The ACP reunifies incarcerated women – most of whom are primary caregivers – with their children. In 2007, the CDCR estimated that 4,500 incarcerated women would be eligible for the ACP. Since then, only 460 women have been placed in the program. The bill also expands eligibility by removing exclusions based on prior medical and psychiatric conditions. Both bills passed the Senate Public Safety Committee and now move to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

FCLCA supports **AB 86**, by Kevin McCarty (D-Sacramento) to require the Department of Justice (DOJ) to conduct an independent investigation when a person dies as a result of the use of deadly force by a police officer. The DOJ would be required to prepare recommendations to the Attorney General and to the district attorney in the county where the incident occurred. **AB 619**, by Shirley Weber (D-San Diego) creates additional reporting requirements for the Attorney General when a person dies or sustains serious bodily injury while in the custody of law enforcement or in a correctional facility and requires that the information be posted on the Attorney General's website. FCLCA supports **AB 953**, also by Assembly Member Weber, which revises the definition of racial profiling to include racial and identity profiling and requires the Attorney General to create the Racial and Identity Profiling Advisory Board to identify profiling and practices and to make findings and recommendations public. **SB 227**, by Holly Mitchell (D-Los Angeles) prohibits the use of criminal grand juries when the evidence indicates that a police officer's use of excessive force or a firearm resulted in the death of a civilian, and **SB 411**, by

Ricardo Lara, clarifies that the recording or photographing of police officers in the course of their duties does not constitute obstruction of justice. Both bills are supported by FCLCA.

Economic Justice

FCLCA is joining other advocates in urging the Budget Committees to restore funding for child care slots. Over 100,000 slots have been lost since the Great Recession. About 5,000 slots were restored last year. Subsidized child care is a key factor in helping single mothers rejoin the workforce as most entry-level jobs do not pay well enough to pay for day care. **AB 43**, by Assembly Member Mark Stone, would create a refundable state earned income tax credit (EITC) that mirrors the federal earned income tax credit. The EITC is a proven method of reducing poverty. Fully two-thirds of those households below the poverty line in California have at least one family member who is working and would benefit. While the LAO admits that the economic stimulus provided by enacting a state EITC would generate tax revenue, it also maintains that the amounts are hard to quantify and does not include them when pegging the ongoing annual revenue loss to the state at approximately \$1 billion. Speaker Toni Atkins (D-Chula Vista), however, has pledged to search for a way to fund the proposed state EITC.

FCLCA is also supporting **SB 3**, by Mark Leno, to increase California's minimum wage, which has not kept pace with the rate of inflation, to \$11 per hour by 2016 and \$13 per hour by 2017. SB 3 passed the Senate Labor and Industrial Relations Committee and now moves to the Senate Appropriations Committee. **AB 1007**, by Assembly Members McCarty and Stone, would set the minimum wage beginning in 2016 at the amount necessary to keep a family of three above the supplemental poverty level. FCLCA is supportive; however, we recently learned that the authors do not intend to move the bill until next year.

In the mid-1990's, California enacted legislation under the guise of cracking down on so-called "welfare cheats" that prohibits a family that is collecting CalWORKS (California's version of the Temporary Assistance to Need Families program) from receiving additional benefits upon the birth of a child. Known as the "maximum family grant," the short-sighted law was intended to discourage

people who collect public assistance from avoiding work by having additional children. At that time, CalWORKS grants equaled 80 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (currently \$11,770 for an individual and \$20,090 for a family of three) and there was no time limit on the program. Today there is a two-year time limit and grants average 40 percent of the FPL. There has been no documented reduction in birth rates stemming from the prohibition, but the law has penalized families and contributed to childhood poverty by spreading already meager cash benefits even thinner. (A CalWORKS grant for a family of three in a high-cost area of California is \$704 per month.) The California Department of Social Services estimates that 135,000 children are affected by the Maximum Family Grant rule. FCLCA is supporting **SB 23**, by Senator Holly Mitchell, to repeal the Maximum Family Grant rule. The bill passed the Senate Human Services Committee and now moves to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 474, by Assembly Members Cheryl Brown (D-San Bernardino) and Tony Thurmond (D-Richmond) would raise the SSI/SSP grants that help blind and disabled people to 112 percent of the federal poverty level in 2015-2016 and annually thereafter. Grants were reduced in 2007 and no cost of living adjustments have since been provided. As a result, grants now equal about 90 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL).

We are a nation of immigrants and FCLCA recognizes the continuing contributions made by immigrants to our state's economic and cultural well-being. Approximately 1 million undocumented California residents are ineligible to purchase health insurance under the Affordable Care Act due to their immigration status. **SB 4**, by Ricardo Lara (D-Bell Gardens), takes the bold step of expanding Medi-Cal eligibility to all individuals who meet income eligibility requirements regardless of immigration status. It also directs the state to seek federal approval of a waiver in order to allow undocumented residents to purchase health insurance through Covered California. Should the federal waiver be denied, SB 4 directs the state to create a mirror exchange to provide equivalent coverage to undocumented persons.

FCLCA has joined with other advocates in lobbying the Assembly and Senate Budget Committees to

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The earned income tax credit, AB 43, is a proven method of reducing poverty

provide a minimum of \$20 million for the creation of a program to assist immigrants with the implementation of the Obama administration's immigration relief initiative. FCLCA also supports **SB 10**, also by Sen. Lara, which creates the Office of New Americans in the governor's office and could serve the over 1.5 million California residents who will be eligible for relief under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program and the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Residents program.

Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins is making affordable housing a priority. FCLCA supports **AB 1335**, the Building Homes and Trust Act, to create a permanent funding stream for constructing affordable housing by assessing a fee on the recording of real estate documents.

Environmental Justice

FCLCA has been advocating with the "SB 535 Coalition." **SB 535**, by Kevin de León (D-Los Angeles) was enacted into law in 2012 and requires a minimum 10 percent of all Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds (GGRF) be spent in disadvantaged communities with a minimum 25 percent spent for the benefit of those communities. With cap and trade revenues increasing, the coalition has called for increased spending to reduce heavy-duty vehicle emissions, to support low-income energy programs and urban and community forestation projects and to provide transit passes for low-income communities. To our chagrin, the Brown administration recently claimed that all \$250 million of High Speed Rail funding from the GGRF will be located in and for the benefit of low-income communities. The coalition asked the Assembly Budget Subcommittee to carefully probe this issue. FCLCA is supporting **SB 20**, by Fran Pavley (D-Agoura Hills), **SB 208** by Ricardo Lara and **AB 496** by Anthony Rendon (D-Lakewood) (see "Clean Water is a Human Right, Not a Privilege," on page 1).

FCLCA is supporting **SB 32**, by Fran Pavley, which sets a new target of reducing climate pollution in California to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. We also support **SB 350** by Kevin de León, which sets new enforceable standards for reducing petroleum by 50 percent, raising the amount of power

generated by renewables to 50 percent and increasing energy efficiency in buildings by 50 percent by 2030. As amended, **SB 185**, also by Kevin de León, calls for the California State Teachers Retirement System (CALSTRS) and California Public Employee Retirement System (CALPERS) to divest in thermal coal companies by 2017, though they would be exempted from taking any action unless CALSTRS and CALPERS determines that divestiture is consistent with their fiduciary responsibilities.

Peace and Militarism

For at least the sixth time, the Selective Service System has sponsored legislation to link driver's license applications to automatic registration with the Selective Service System. **AB 82**, by Cristina

Garcia (D-Bell Gardens), creates a conclusive presumption that in applying for a driver's license a male between the ages of 16 and 26 consents to having his information forwarded to the Selective Service System for the purposes of being registered. FCLCA opposes the bill for numerous reasons but primarily on the grounds that

persons who oppose registration with the Selective Service System on the basis of religious or personal convictions would have to choose to ignore their convictions in order to obtain a driver's license. The bill may also run afoul of **AB 60**, legislation enacted in the previous session that makes undocumented persons eligible for a driver's license. The Privacy Act Statement that accompanies paper registration forms and on-line registration forms clearly states that the Selective Service System may share information with other government agencies, including the "Department of State & U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services – for collection and evaluation of data to determine a person's eligibility for entry/reentry into the United States and for U.S. citizenship." Presumably a person applying for a driver's license who is automatically registering would not see the Privacy Act Statement and would not realize they were consenting to have their information shared. FCLCA is opposing **AB 82**, which will be heard in the Assembly Transportation Committee in late April. [FCLCA](#)

– Jim Lindburg (JimL@fclca.org)

FCLCA is supporting SB 32 which sets a new target of reducing climate pollution

FCL Education Fund Presents Workshop to Visiting Eighth-Graders From San Francisco Friends School *Chris Yager*

On April 1, 2015, the FCL Education Fund hosted a workshop for the San Francisco Friends School eighth grade class during their week-long class trip to Sacramento and the Central Valley. Thanks to the support of FCL Education Fund donors, we've been working for several months to put together a new, comprehensive workbook for grassroots lobbyists (people like you and me) about what really goes on at the Capitol as a bill moves through the process and how we as civic activists can have a real impact on legislation. We call it the "Bring Your Voice" project.

We are still developing the workbook and a training workshop to go along with it, so we decided to "test it out" on the newest generation of activists, the San Francisco Friends School's students. For this workshop, we focused on an actual bill that the students were interested in – one that would benefit homeless youth – and took them through the policy committee process. They learned how to "read" a bill, how the committee staff prepares a bill analysis, and the importance of weighing in with committee members prior to the bill's hearing.

This was the second year in a row that FCLCA has put on a workshop for the SFFS students, so we knew we were going to be getting some really bright, inquisitive kids. They didn't disappoint in the least. Throughout the afternoon their insightful questions led the discussion and really showed their interest and curiosity about the legislative process and lobbying.

Thanks to the help of the wonderful staff in Senator Mark Leno's (D-San Francisco) office, who helped us reserve the room, we were able to meet in one of the beautiful Senate hearing rooms in the old western wing of the Capitol. With the Legislature on break for the week and all of the legislators home in their districts, we were able to secure a prime location for our workshop!

Danielle Lenth, legislative assistant to Sen. Leno, came to speak with the eighth-graders about her work, stressing how important it is for her to hear from the people who will be affected by the bills she is researching for the Senator. This is a critical part of the information she gathers as she makes recommendations to Sen. Leno on which bills to support and oppose. Ms. Lenth established a great connection with the kids, answering question after question. Their inquiries ranged from the interaction of lobbyists and legislators, to how the legislature balances competing bills, to the mysteries of the fiscal committees' suspense file. (Note:



this mystery will be solved in our upcoming "Bring Your Voice" workbook.)

Then Jim Lindburg, our Legislative Director, spoke to the students about FCLCA's work, and why we need ordinary citizens to come to Sacramento to help us lobby. He explained that we need people to tell legislators and staffers like Ms. Lenth their own stories and how bills would affect them. These sorts of personal narratives are key tools for FCLCA to help legislators understand the impacts a bill will have on real people and have much more power when delivered firsthand.

We ended the afternoon with a "role play" demonstrating the importance of the scrutiny bills receive during the policy committee process. For convenience, the four class clerks were selected to play committee members considering a bill to distribute "tax revenues" (candy). The bill proposed to distribute the candy equally amongst all of the "tax-payers." It was pointed out that only the teachers pay taxes, so only they would receive a share of the candy. The students then testified before the committee on the unfairness of the bill's proposed distribution of the candy and suggested potential changes to the bill to improve it. Apparently, their testimony was persuasive, as the committee asked for the bill to be amended to fairly distribute the candy, before passing it on to the larger body. [FCLCA](#)

FCL Education Fund still needs to raise about \$8,000 to complete the "Bring Your Voice" workbook and training workshop. We plan to offer it both to local community groups and activists who come to Sacramento. If you would like to help, you can send a contribution designated for FCL Education Fund.

**FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON
LEGISLATION OF CALIFORNIA**

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*In memoriam



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The Friends Committee on Legislation of California (FCLCA) includes Friends and like-minded persons, a majority of whom are appointed by Monthly Meetings of the Religious Society of Friends in California.

Expressions of views in this newsletter are guided by Statements of Policy prepared and approved by the FCLCA Committees. Seeking to follow the leadings of the Spirit, the FCLCA speaks for itself and for like-minded Friends. No organization can speak officially for the Religious Society of Friends.

While we strive above all for correctness and probity, we are quick to recognize that to err is human. We therefore solicit and welcome comments and corrections from our readers.