The voice of midlife and older women

OWL NEWSLETTER

SAN FRANCISCO

July - September 2026

OWL–SF focuses exclusively on critical issues facing women as they age. We work together to improve the status and quality of life for midlife and older women through national, state, and local networks.

OWL-SF presents

Summer Luncheon and Book Swap

Friday, July 24, 2026 from 11:30 AM to 2 PM

Waller Urban Retreat Center
1525 Waller Street (near Clayton)

Please join us for our in-person summer luncheon. Connect with new and longtime friends. Lunch, catered by Say Cheese, is complimentary for OWL-SF members and a guest. Bring a book to swap! Let us know if you would like to bring a dessert.

RSVP: No later than Tuesday, July 21st

Accessible by MUNI lines 7, 33, 37 and 43, plus the N streetcar. There is limited parking at the facility for those with a disabled permit. Street parking can be difficult.

Political Advisory Committee (PAC) Report

May 28, 2026

by Melanie Grossman

1) Mayor's budget: To be released on June 1. Membership meeting held on May 30th will give us more details on how we and other groups can influence who gets funded and for how much. Once the budget is released by the Mayor, Supervisors cannot change the total amount but can influence where the money is allocated. After June 1 constituents can contact Supervisors and advocate for older citizens' rights.

2) Housing: Nothing new to report on issue of market rate housing being built on top of Safeway Supermarkets. Issue tabled for now, but it will be kept on the top of next month's agenda.

3) Medicare: PAC member Tina Martin joined a group from CARA to meet with a representative from Nancy Pelosi's office about the use of AI to make decisions in Medicare regarding Prior Authorization for procedures, medication, and some services. This practice, called WISER, is part of a pilot program not yet in California. The group requested that Ms. Pelosi be alerted to the harm being done by the WISER program and requests her support for H.R. 5940, The SMARTER Act, which improves healthcare services for seniors by modernizing services overall, and making care more intelligent and person centered. Melanie will create an alert for this Bill.

4) Closure of Downton City College Campus: Supporters of keeping the downtown campus of City College open would like more detailed information on why the Downtown campus was closed, as well as a return to focusing on services for seniors.

5) PAC Alerts: Alerts continue to lag. The new system of allowing all OWL members to suggest and send alerts proved too complicated in terms of implementation and consistency. Committee decided to go back to the original system where only Board and PAC members could send alerts out, using the original system where names were listed alphabetically, and assigned a month. The person assigned would send out 2 or more alerts per month, with Susan Pedrick helping in keeping the list updated and reminding persons when they were up for the month, plus help with formatting and sending the alerts out.

6) Voting Rights: Concern about this issue by some PAC members. Carry over to next month's meeting.

Board Members	**Newsletter**	**OWL SF Board Meeting**
Maxine Anderson, Co-President Paula Barber, Co-President Joan Downey, Treasurer Barbara Gersh Glenda Hope Margaret Lew Betty Traynor, Secretary	Linda Phillips, Acting Editor Tina Martin **Political Advisory Committee** Lela Harris Glenda Hope Betty Traynor Melanie Grossman Maxine Anderson Tina Martin	First Monday of month, 4–5 pm, Zoom link available upon request **Phone:** (415) 712-1695 **Email:** info@owlsf.org **Web:** www.owlsf.org **Mail:** Post Office Box 170622, San Francisco CA 94117

But What Does OWL Do?

by Glenda Hope

OWL-SF is primarily an advocacy organization fighting for the empowerment, dignity, and security of women over 50.

OWL-SF does not have a single specific focus such as guns or abortion or animal rescue. We take up many critical issues, seeking to educate and organize people about them to effect positive change. We have an ongoing effort to both protect and to expand Social Security, joining with other organizations such as Strengthen Social Security and the California Alliance for Retired Americans. We filter a great deal of material then pass it on to our members and others via a membership meeting, the OWL-SF Newsletter, an eBlast, or a mailing. The major means of education and motivation into action is the monthly membership meetings, which do focus on a specific topic for a presentation followed by questions and discussion. All of these communications include names and addresses of public officials who can be contacted via email, letters, or phone calls.

OWL-SF members also testify at public hearings and participate with others in rallies and demonstrations. I remember marching with several other OWLs, proudly wearing our purple OWL T-shirts and carrying our banner. Some younger women caught sight of us and exclaimed happily at the sight of women proud of their age and standing for justice. They said they were inspired by us and our refusal to sit back, be silent, and let injustice prevail. Little did they know that many OWL-SF members have been working for peace and justice since the '60s and '70s, long before they were born.

We also seek to educate and organize to influence many local and state concerns. The annual September meeting to hear pros and cons on selected ballot issues is an example. Pressuring local and state officials to budget more of our tax money for in-home care services is another justice issue for many midlife and older women (as well as men).

Many of our members are involved with social service agencies such as those providing food, clothing, or shelter, or someone to talk with if a person is feeling suicidal. But OWL-SF is not a service agency. Many members are involved with clubs such as those organized around books or gardening or emotional support. No need for OWL to duplicate those. We do, however, seek to educate people about their rights as hospital patients, about thinking through and completing that so vital Advance Directive for Health Care, about wise money management, and more.

Sometimes people think we are too serious, even though we laugh a lot. We live in serious times and there is serious work to do which OWL-SF supports us in doing through education and companions. A wonderful camaraderie develops among older women working together for good and feeling good about working together.

This is what OWL-SF does.

What Is CARA, and What Does It Do?

by Tina Martin

I first became the liaison between the California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA) and the Retiree Chapter of City College's faculty union, AFT 2121, after my retirement from City College. In 2017, a former president of our faculty union asked whether I would be willing to attend the monthly meetings of the San Francisco CARA Action Team (CAT) and report back to fellow retirees. I'd never heard of CARA, but I was curious and agreed to give it a try.

This was shortly after I'd discovered OWL and become a member. I soon learned that OWL and CARA share many of the same values and concerns and that OWL is, in fact, an affiliate of CARA. Both organizations educate, inform, and activate members on issues affecting older adults, people with disabilities, workers, and our communities, though they do so through somewhat different channels.

CARA is the California affiliate of the national Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA), a grassroots advocacy organization founded in 2001 that now has more than 4 million members and affiliates in every state. Closely allied with the AFL-CIO, CARA includes many retired (but not very retiring) union members, as well as community members who share our values and want to advocate for seniors and people with disabilities.

The San Francisco CAT now meets jointly with Action Teams from Alameda, Contra Costa/Solano, Marin, Santa Clara, and Sonoma Counties. During the first part of each meeting, we hear reports and coordinate activities across the region. We then break into county groups to focus on local issues and concerns. My reports to the AFT 2121 Retiree Chapter reflect both the regional work we do together and the local concerns most relevant to retired faculty members.

One reason I continue to participate is that CARA provides a practical way for retirees to stay engaged and make a difference. Here are some examples of what the San Francisco CAT has done during the past year:

• Helped pass Proposition 50 by making calls through a modern, user-friendly phone-banking system. When Republicans in Texas sought to redraw Congressional district boundaries for partisan advantage, CARA organized outreach to support California's effort to maintain fair representation.

• Met in person with State Senator Scott Wiener on October 17, 2025, to discuss the impact of federal legislation affecting seniors and people with disabilities and what California could do in response.

• Organized and led San Francisco's observance of Human Rights Day on December 10 on the steps of City Hall.

• Held our annual Lobby Day, this year on May 5, 2026, meeting with legislative staff from the offices of State Senator Scott Wiener and Assembly Members Catherine Stefani, Diane Papan, and later Matt Haney to advocate for legislation important to seniors, including AB 1790 (Ending the Water's Edge Tax Loophole), AB 2575 (Healthcare by Humans Act), and AJR 25 (Restore ACA Cuts).

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• Met with Edgar Varga from Representative Nancy Pelosi's office to seek support for the SMARTER Care Act (H.R. 5940), which would repeal the WISER model, a system that uses artificial intelligence in ways that could increase prior-authorization denials in Traditional Medicare.

• Joined the People's Budget Coalition, a broad alliance of community organizations advocating for a San Francisco budget that protects and strengthens public services. Several members of the San Francisco CAT have become active participants in the coalition's work on behalf of seniors, people with disabilities, workers, and other vulnerable residents.

These activities represent only a sample of what CARA members do. While not every OWL member is interested in legislative advocacy, those who are may find CARA an effective way to learn about important issues, meet like-minded activists, and make their voices heard. Retirees may have left the workplace, but through organizations such as OWL and CARA, we can continue to shape the policies that affect our lives, our communities, and future generations.

If you'd like to learn more, you're welcome to attend a meeting of the San Francisco CARA Action Team, which meets from 10:00 a.m. to noon on the second Wednesday of each month, either on Zoom or in person at the Labor Council Building on Franklin Street. You might also enjoy CARA's Fabulous Friday Forums, online programs featuring speakers and discussions on issues affecting seniors, people with disabilities, workers, and advocates for social justice.

To receive meeting notices, agendas, and links to these programs, email me at Tina_Martin@sbcglobal.net with "How to Join CARA" in the subject line. You may also contact CARA directly by emailing info@californiaalliance.org or calling (510) 663-4086 to learn more about membership and opportunities for involvement.

OWL Leader Rev. Dr. Glenda Hope Honored

On May 16, 2026, the University of the Redlands, a member of the Graduate Theological Union and the San Francisco Theological Seminary, conferred the Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters degree on Glenda Hope. Glenda's "pivotal work in social justice and women's rights and through the national Civil Rights Movement" as well as "peace building, reconciliation, and interfaith dialogue" were cited as "the values we endeavor to teach our students." Her ongoing commitment, at age 90, to the mission and work of the Older Women's League was noted as an example of continuing this lifetime of work for justice.

OWLs Give a Hoot

by Glenda Hope

On “No Kings Day” on March 28 many San Francisco OWLs joined in a march for Justice, for Defense of our Democracy, for safeguards to Voting Rights and truly Free Elections, for an End to Wars instigated by our by our country, for Food, Health Care, Child Care, Elder Care, Education, and so much more.

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Some OWLs who can no longer march gathered in a lovely space in the Coterie to write letters to new (presumably young) voters in the swing state of Pennsylvania. We reminded them that the midterm elections are critical for our country, urging them: Your Vote is Your Voice.

This alternative to the No Kings March, was truly a team effort. Melanie Grossman reserved the space for us to write, providing delicious snacks and excellent coffee. Joan Downey got us the stamps and closure stickers. Barbara Gersh found and printed the 100 letters we sent. Barbara came to my house with them, teaching me how to fold the self-mailer letters, write, seal and stamp them, so that I could

guide the others while Barbara marched. Our writers had to be reminded to print their message, as these were young voters and many schools no longer teach cursive!

The wars rage on. We must guard against the paralysis caused by cognitive dissonance as we sit in comfort and safety knowing of the suffering elsewhere.

The OWL Reading Group --- Mostly Short Stories

We meet on Zoom every month on the second Tuesday, 10 to 11 am, to discuss a short reading, such as a short story (usually), poem, or essay. Join us by contacting Louise DiMattio (ladimat@aol.com), who will let you know the selection currently being read. She will also provide you with the ZOOM connection. You can participate by computer or by phone call.

Grieving the Loss of a Pet

by Linda Phillips

In a single month, 3 women in my social circle lost their beloved dogs. This so triggered memories of my own grief that I re-read a book that had helped me though the pain: *Grieving the Death of a Pet* by Barbara J. Carmack (2003; available on Amazon).

Carmack shares stories of pet owners who lost their companion animals from a variety of causes, including sudden death by accident or unexpected medical issue, prolonged deterioration associated with advanced age or disease, and euthanasia of a hyper-aggressive animal that endangered humans or other animals. In my life, I've grieved the loss of dogs for each of these reasons. I lost my born-to-run collie-pointer mix from heat stroke he suffered chasing a jackrabbit in the desert. I euthanized one of my 2 schipperkes to spare him the agony of cancer, and the other because of multiple disabilities accumulated during her 17-year life. The hyper-aggressive dog was a semi-feral Rottweiler mix I adopted (friends in Kentucky found her "living rough" and urgently needing medical attention). Wanting to give her a better life, I had her flown to SF and we bonded immediately. Unfortunately, she remained a wild thing, and in the following months she was an intractable threat to my mother, many other adults, and any child. Fearing a potential tragedy, I followed the advice of my vet and had her put down.

The decision to euthanize a beloved pet is agonizing. How do you know when it is the right time to let go? For an unwell animal, might interventions that could prolong their life for a while, such as chemo or

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invasive surgery for cancer, also prolong their suffering? Are such interventions within the owner's financial means, and can they provide continuous care during a lengthy treatment and recovery process? Besides grieving the absence of my furry family members, I've often second-guessed my decisions and after many years haven't fully shed the guilt I felt in each instance. For these feelings, Carmack's book has been especially therapeutic.

Many books are available on how to cope with the grief of these losses, as are one-on-one and group therapy. A resource that includes a directory of available services is the Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement (https://www.aplb.org). Carmack's book was of great solace to me. To all of you who are experiencing this trauma, I hope you will seek out the resources that may help lessen your pain---especially the love from your friends, many of whom have "been there."

Whoo Wants to Know? A New Feature from Tina Martin

This issue's topic:
What do you do for fun?

Paulette Aroesty: I live at the Rhoda Goldman Plaza, where there are a lot of activities. I also go to Fromm. I went to a 99th birthday party yesterday, when there were 20 women at the table, all participating in life and having fun. Discussions, music, good meals, movies…I try to make every day count.

Kathie Piccagli: Reading books, being in natural places, talking to friends and others. Music makes life so much better. I am (sorry to say) a political junkie, and the biggest issue in my life is the climate crisis. If we don't tackle and solve this problem, other things won't matter.

Janet Tom: I like to explore different neighborhoods in San Francisco. I'll take Muni to a neighborhood I haven't been to before and go into local grocery stores, try something at a bakery, see where people gather together: is there a coffee house, bookstore, or library nearby? Maybe I'll have lunch at a local restaurant and then go for a walk if there's a nearby park.

Karen Crommie: Go to a Commonwealth Club program and walk next door for dinner at Perry's. Ride the N Judah out to the beach and walk with my shoes off. Successfully fix something that's broken or revive a dying plant. Actually complete the day's "To Do" list. Plan a trip---probably more fun than the trip itself.

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Louise diMattio: I love to travel to Great Books meetings in other parts of the USA and Canada. That's my truest love. I've met some wonderful people, had some great discussions and read some amazing books in the process. It is wonderful when I am invited to lead discussions in other parts of the country. Sometimes they even pay my airfare. Secret, though, I would happily pay it myself because I enjoy it so much. Visiting new and used bookstores wherever I happen to be. I've found some real treasures in Toronto and Philadelphia on my recent trips. Many current authors, like Louise Erdrich and Ann Patchett, own bookstores. Perhaps I'll get a sighting someday!

League of Women Voters of San Francisco

582 Market Street, Suite 615, San Francisco, CA 94104

The League of Women Voters of San Francisco (LWVSF) is a nonpartisan political nonprofit that empowers voters and defends democracy. People of all genders welcome. Learn more at lwvsf.org.

Interested in meeting other San Franciscans who want to make a difference in our community? Want to find out more about volunteering with LWVSF? Looking to learn what we do to empower voters in San Francisco? Then come to our next happy hour! Everyone is welcome, so invite your friends. (But remember, we're nonpartisan, so candidate campaigning is not allowed.)

Happy hour with the LWVSF
WHEN: Tuesday, July 7, 2026, 5:30–7:30pm
WHERE: Rikki's Women's Sports Bar, 2223 Market St, San Francisco
REGISTER: https://luma.com/295nlfyc?utm_source=owlsf or there is a link to register at https://lwvsf.org/calendar.

Election kickoff meetings: Volunteer with LWVSF for the November 2026 election
Choose to attend online or in person, the information presented is the same. You do not need to be a member to volunteer.

Online option:
WHEN: Wednesday, July 15, 6:00–7:00pm
WHERE: A Zoom link will be shared after you register.
REGISTER: https://luma.com/r81o9e0j?utm_source=owlsf or there is a link to register at https://lwvsf.org/calendar.

In-person option:
WHEN: Saturday, July 18, 10:30–11:30am
WHERE: Western Addition Branch Library, 1550 Scott St, SF
REGISTER: https://luma.com/1aqkkbgp?utm_source=owlsf or there is a link to register at https://lwvsf.org/calendar.

Regret Missing an OWL Event? Visit OWL website!

Recordings or slides from several past informational events, including topics on health, political action, assisted living, and aging in place, are available at our website: https://www.owlsf.org.

Food for Thought

If we accept and acquiesce in the face of discrimination, we accept the responsibility ourselves and allow those responsible to salve their conscience by believing that they have our acceptance and concurrence. We should, therefore, protest openly everything…that smacks of discrimination or slander. Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955), *"Certain Unalienable Rights."* From *What the Negro Wants* [1944], edited by Rayford W. Logan.

The statesmen will invent cheap lies, putting the blame upon the nation that is attacked, and every man will be glad of those conscience-soothing falsities, and will diligently study them, and refuse to examine any refutations of them, and thus he will by and by convince himself that the war is just and will thank God for the better sleep he enjoys after this process of grotesque self-deception ensues. Mark Twain (1835-1910), *The Mysterious Stranger* [1922].

East is east and west is San Francisco, according to Californians. Californians are a race of people; they are not merely inhabitants of a state. O. Henry (1862-1910), *Strictly Business. A Municipal Report* [1910].

In spite of illness, in spite even of the archenemy sorrow, one *can* remain alive long past the usual date of disintegration if one is unafraid of change, insatiable in intellectual curiosity, interested in big things, and happy in small ways. Edith Wharton (1932-1937). *A Backward Glance. A First Word*. [1934].

There are some days when solitude, for a person of my age, is an intoxicating wine that makes you drunk with freedom, other days when it's a bitter tonic, and still other days when it's a poison that makes you bang your head on the wall. Collette (1873-1954), *La Vagabonde* [1910].

You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But those things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand. Margery Williams (1881-1944). *The Velveteen Rabbit* [1922].

Let us pick up our books and our pens. They are our most powerful weapons. Malala Yousafzai (1997 -), *Address to the United Nations* [July 12, 2013].

Welcome New OWL-SF Member Carole Isaacs

Membership

YES! I WANT TO JOIN OWL-SF!

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____

CITY STATE ZIP

TELEPHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Annual dues of $50 are recommended. (If you are unable to pay the recommended amount, OWL-SF has established a sliding fee scale from $50 –$10.) Members receive the quarterly OWL SF Newsletter, advocacy Alerts and invitations to monthly meetings.

Make a check out to and mail to:
OWL-SF
P.O. Box 170622
San Francisco, CA 94117

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The Founding of OWL

OWL was born in 1980 in Des Moines, Iowa, during one of the pre-conferences held around the country in preparation for the third White House Conference on Aging, which was held in 1981 in Washington, DC. At the pre-conference in Des Moines, TISH SOMMERS noted that little attention was being paid to the ways in which aging was different for women. She called for a special "ad hoc" meeting to discuss this concern. OWL has been a voice for the special concerns of midlife and older women ever since.

OWL-SF will not share or sell our membership list or any information about our members.

We are a local, 501(c)3, volunteer organization with a general membership. A Board of Directors is elected by the membership.

Comments or questions? Please contact the OWL-SF Office at (415) 712-1695.
e-mail: info@owlsf.org