

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

# WOMEN’S SOCCER IS THE LATEST CHAPTER IN #METOO SAGA

Back in May, I wrote that it seemed to be the “best of times” for women’s soccer in the U.S. I made that pronouncement after hearing about the landmark collective bargaining agreement between the unions representing the women’s and men’s national soccer teams.

The agreement gave women and men equal economic opportunity in terms of tournament bonuses, appearances fees and other forms of compensation. For women, it meant a bump in earnings of as much as 49 percent.

But holding true to the full Charles Dickens quote — “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times” — there is a dark side to the U.S. women’s soccer story. A very dark side.

Earlier this month, the U.S. Soccer Federation and the National Women’s Soccer League were implicated for their failure to provide a safe environment for players and repeatedly ignoring allegations of abuse and inappropriate behavior by coaches over many years.

The investigation was led by former acting Attorney General

Sally Yates and a team of attorneys.

They interviewed more than 200 players, coaches, owners and front-office staff and reviewed thousands of documents.

Their report said, “Teams, the league, and the federation not only repeatedly failed to respond appropriately when confronted with player reports and evidence of abuse, they also failed to institute basic measures to prevent and address it, even as some leaders privately acknowledged the need for workplace protections.” The misbehavior was described as an “open secret” that existed for years, enabled by systems that left players voiceless and unprotected.

Here we go again: another report of women being abused in the workplace, precisely five years after the Harvey Weinstein news broke.

Weinstein, a producer, was considered one of the most powerful men in Hollywood. An investigation led by two New York Times reporters revealed allegations against him — including sexual harassment and unwanted phys-

ical contact — spanning nearly three decades.

The revelation marked the unofficial start of the #MeToo movement, although the term was coined more than a decade prior. It shined a light on the pervasiveness of sexual harassment — not just in the movie industry, but across society.

In 2020, Weinstein was convicted in New York on charges of criminal sexual acts and rape in the third degree. His second criminal trial began in Los Angeles last week.

In the five years since publication of the Times’ story, there have been strides and setbacks in the fight against sexual harassment in workplaces. Companies of various sizes and industries pledged to do better, reviewing their sexual harassment policies and revamping anti-harassment training programs.

At the same time, state lawmakers launched efforts to reform workplace anti-harassment laws. According to the National Women’s Law Center, 22 states and the District of Columbia have passed a total of more than 70 workplace

anti-harassment bills, many with bipartisan support.

But progress has been uneven, as we learned in the report about U.S. women’s soccer. It was commissioned following a story that ran in The Athletic, which alleged verbal and sexual misconduct by former NWSL head coach Paul Riley.

Riley, it turns out, was a serial abuser. He was fired by the Portland Thorns after a player complained of repeated harassment, although the reasons for his departure from the team weren’t disclosed.

He wasn’t disciplined by the league, either. He went on to become the coach of the North Carolina Courage, where his abusive behavior continued.

Riley finally lost his job and coaching license last year.

According to the Yates report, Riley wasn’t the only problem coach to move from team to team. A systemwide culture of silence — and fears of retaliation — enabled the moves.

Players had nowhere to turn: For years, the league operated without a commissioner and most

teams had no human resources department — or even an anonymous reporting line.

The report included a list of recommendations to improve player safety. It will mean, in part, empowering players to speak up when they see or experience potentially harmful interactions or situations.

It will also mean responding appropriately to reports of abuse and holding offenders accountable. These are table stakes in a professional, respectful work environment.

Circumstances will improve for women in soccer, just as they’ve improved for women in some workplaces across the country. But real progress won’t happen until we acknowledge and address the power of patriarchy in America.

It will be difficult. But once we do, the best of times awaits us all.

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based group working to create solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. To learn about NCRC’s programming, visit [ncrconline.com](http://ncrconline.com)

## VOTE

FROM **B1**

urday, Nov. 5, through Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 8.

In addition, 39 of those centers open sooner and will offer in-person voting for 11 days, starting Saturday, Oct. 29.

On Election Day, Nov. 8, all vote centers will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

To find locations and hours for vote centers and ballot drop boxes in your community, visit the Registrar of Voters website.

### How it works

Under the previous system, each voter was assigned a local polling place, and had to vote provisionally in order to cast their ballot at a different one. Now, voters can go to any center in the county, where workers will use an electronic poll book with a roster of all registered voters.

The electronic pollbook matches each voter to the



ADRIANA HELDIZ U-T FILE

**Poll workers help voters at the vote center in Carmel Mountain Ranch Community Park Poway in June.**

ballot that shows the correct races for their address, accessing one of 796 local ballot configurations for this election, San Diego County Registrar Cynthia Paes said.

“That just says these are the unique districts that make up your precinct,” Paes said. “Once they put in that code, it’s going to pull down one of those 700-plus

ballot types ... The code is entered into the ballot-marking device, which is separate from everything else.”

Voters use a ballot-marking device, which is not connected to the Internet or any other digital system, to fill out their ballots. The machine then prints a paper ballot that records their choices, and that is submit-

ted to the ballot box.

As an alternative, voters can fill out their mail ballots at home or at the vote center and place them in the ballot box on site.

Vote centers also can provide replacement ballots, language interpretation, translated materials and same-day registration.

Any eligible voters who missed the deadline to register can complete the registration form and enter a provisional ballot on the spot, Paes said. The registrar will then validate the registration and count the ballot.

“It’s got your ballot in five languages,” Paes said. “You can bring it up in Spanish, Filipino, Vietnamese and Chinese. It has an audio ballot. If you’re blind, you can mark your ballot independently, on your own, using that device. And then you print out your official ballot, which has your selections printed on the ballot.”

deborah.brennan@suniontribune.com

## 75TH

FROM **B1**

and 22 percent “No Party Preference.”

Waldron also leads big on the financial front. From Jan. 1 through Sept. 24, she raised \$181,000 and had \$248,000 in cash on hand. Voepel raised \$12,000 and had \$3,400 in cash.

Barry Jantz, a former La Mesa City Council member and a longtime observer of East County politics, said money explains why the campaign has been quiet. He lives in the 75th District and said last week that he’s received just one mailer so far about the election — from Waldron.

“If Voepel had the money, we’d probably be seeing a knock-down, drag-out donnybrook between two well-established names,” Jantz said. “But it doesn’t appear at this point he will be able to compete, and for me the writing is on the wall. It says Waldron is going to win.”

Neither candidate responded to interview requests for this article.

**Similar positions, backgrounds**

Head-to-head battles involving candidates from the same political party have been part of California’s electoral landscape since 2010, when voters approved the “top two” primary system.

All the candidates are listed on the same ballot for the primary, regardless of party affiliation. The top two finishers then run against each other in the general election. (Previously, Republicans and Democrats ran in separate primaries with the top vote-getter in each advancing to the general election.)

The idea behind the change was that more moderate candidates would be elected because they would appeal to a larger number of voters. The jury is still out on whether it’s worked that way.

In the state Assembly races this year, 14 of the 80 districts have two Democrats competing against each other on Nov. 8. That includes the 80th, in San Diego, where one of the candidates, Georgette Gómez, dropped out in the race against David Alvarez.

Three of the races have Republicans as the two finalists, including the 75th and the 71st, Voepel’s former district. It now covers a swath of Riverside and Orange counties.

Voepel, 72, and Waldron, 62, share similar positions on policy issues and have similar political backgrounds. Both started at the local level, with Voepel on the City Council in Santee and Waldron on the council in Escondido.

In the Assembly, Waldron has had the higher profile, rising to leader of the GOP caucus, a position she held from 2018 until earlier this year.

She has served on a half-dozen committees over the years, including as vice chair of two, Health and Rules. According to the Legislator Tracker compiled by CalMatters, Waldron is “moderate right” compared with her Assembly colleagues.

Her conservative leanings showed up in ratings from various special interests groups, too. Both the Chamber of Commerce and the Howard Jarvis Taxpayer Association gave her marks of 91 percent, while California Environmental Voters

(24 percent) and the California Labor Federation (36 percent) were less favorable.

In recent written answers to questions by the Union-Tribune editorial board, Waldron said she’s running for re-election because “California has become unaffordable, our schools are failing our children, housing prices are squeezing the middle class, and our homelessness crisis is worsening.”

She listed as her biggest accomplishments securing funding for five local fire districts and authoring legislation aimed at improving access for mental-health care and substance-abuse treatment.

Because of term limits, if she wins on Nov. 8, this will be her last stint in the Assembly.

**Unanswered questions**

In the Union-Tribune questionnaire, Waldron was asked why voters should pick her over Voepel. She cited her ability to get more bills passed and secure more state funding for the region. But she began her answer in a way that speaks to the non-confrontational nature of the campaign.

“I’ve known my opponent for years,” she wrote. “I respect him, appreciate him and thank him for his years of service.”

Voepel declined to answer questions for the Union-Tribune survey, which may say something about how he views his chances in the election.

He came to the Assembly six years ago with a reputation for unabashed boosterism — he regularly referred to Santee as “La Jolla of East County” — and outlandish comments about homeless people and climate change.

A Vietnam War Navy veteran, he’s been vice chair of the Military and Veterans committee, as well as the Aging and Long-term Care and Public Employment and Retirement committees.

The CalMatters Legislator Tracker puts him to the far right of his colleagues, a label he doesn’t dispute. In 2010, he briefly left the Republican Party, which he said had become too liberal. On his campaign website, he identifies himself as “The Real Conservative.”

His ratings from special interest groups include 100 percent from the Chamber of Commerce, 88 percent from the Howard Jarvis association, 31 percent from California Environmental Voters, and 17 percent from the California Labor Federation.

Voepel drew criticism after the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol when he likened the rioters to American soldiers at the Revolutionary War battles of Lexington and Concord. “First shots fired against tyranny,” he said.

That prompted the California chapters of the Truman National Security Project to ask the state Assembly to expel Voepel. “These words are an explicit glorification of the insurrection and direct incitement of further violence,” the group said.

The Assembly’s first vote in the 2021-22 legislative session was a nonbinding resolution calling on then-President Donald Trump to resign because of the insurrection. It passed, 51-6. Voepel declined to vote either way, as did Waldron.

Assembly members serve two-year terms and are paid \$119,702 annually.

[john.wilkens@suniontribune.com](mailto:john.wilkens@suniontribune.com)

## COUNCIL

FROM **B1**

er this year.

The two candidates she’s supporting, Heredia and Klein, distanced themselves from LeBaron’s methods and said they were unaware of evidence of fraud, though each said they shared concerns about the budget.

“People are wondering where their money’s going because they look around the city and they don’t see the things being done that are most important,” Heredia said.

In interviews with all five candidates, most cited the dilapidated state of many city roads as a top priority. Several also cited homelessness as a concern as well as a need for more economic development, and each weighed in about the potential need for a sales tax.

**Jennifer Mendoza**

Jennifer Mendoza is the race’s lone incumbent.

A former city planning commissioner first elected in 2014, Mendoza said the council needed someone with her institutional knowledge.

“I love what I do and I think that my experience adds value to the city,” she said.

The 67-year-old cited her successful pushes to ban alcohol in city parks and punish businesses selling tobacco to minors as some of her biggest accomplishments. As far as regrets, she said she should have supported a plan to bring more development downtown.

Looking ahead, Mendoza said the city should consider increasing regulations for alcohol licenses and banning single-serve liquor bottles, both of which she said could reduce public drunkenness. She also raised the possibility of turning a lot off Broadway, in a commercial area near a county health and human services office, into a safe parking space for the homeless.

Mendoza said she was open to a sales tax but wanted any proposal to come with an end date and a plan for how to spend the money. She also acknowledged “huge, huge room for improvement” for how the city communicates with residents.

Mendoza is a retired paralegal, and the main income she reported was her spouse’s salary through the United Food and Commer-



**Stephanie Klein**

cial Workers labor union. She also has a rental property.

She raised nearly \$7,000 as of September, most of which was spent, according to her financial disclosure form. Her donors include several attorneys, Mayor Racquel Vasquez, former Councilmember David Arambula and fellow candidate Alysson Snow.

### Stephanie Klein

Stephanie Klein knows how to talk with angry people.

While working for Millennium Health LLC, Klein fielded calls from clients upset about their medical bills, according to her resume. She said she got used to answering complex questions while building rapport with (and calming) clients, all of which could come in handy as a council member.

“We all need somebody that we can call and get an answer from,” Klein said.

Klein, 41, is now a real estate agent who regularly volunteers in the community, and she said the council needed a fresh perspective over an “older way of thinking.” Residents want leaders to spend more time supporting and promoting events in the city, she said.

Klein doesn’t believe a sales tax is necessary. Instead, Lemon Grove needed to better invest the money already coming in and speed up the permit process, she said.

All four challengers were asked what their weaknesses were, and Klein was the only one with a specific answer: The first-time candidate said she did not have a full understanding of how local government worked but looked forward to learning.

Klein reported income as an independent contractor with Roots Real Estate, as well as some stocks. She raised more than \$7,300 as of last month, with about \$2,600 left over, according to financial disclosures.

### Jessyka Heredia

If you’ve watched a Lemon Grove council meeting from home, you can thank Jessyka Heredia.



**Jennifer Mendoza**



**Jessyka Heredia**

The 48-year-old began livestreaming public meetings with her phone at the beginning of the year, and those videos are the only way to remotely watch council members at work. (The city does post audio recordings online the day after.)

“There was some need in my city for new leadership” and “I felt a passion and a calling to it,” she said about her candidacy.

Heredia owns Hair Suite It Is, a hair salon in El Cajon, and is also a regular volunteer. She said her role as a business owner prepared her to partner with other companies and nonprofits to bolster economic development.

The city needed to improve trust with residents before another sales tax proposal should be introduced, she said.

Heredia raised more than \$7,300, with a little less than half still on hand as of September, according to her most recent financial disclosure. Some of her campaign’s largest gifts came from Heredia herself, while others were from frequent critics of the city, such as former council candidate Teresa Rosiak.

### Alysson Snow

Alysson Snow’s legal work has received national attention.

As an attorney with the Legal Aid Society of San Diego, Snow, 48, helped fight a type of energy loan that can hurt low-income homeowners. She’s been interviewed by VICE and the Legal Aid Society was featured on John Oliver’s HBO show “Last Week Tonight.”

“Every member of the City Council recognizes that we still have quite a ways to go to build our community up to what it needs to be,” she said. Leaders needed to partner with volunteers, churches and other organizations, especially with the threat of a recession, she said.

Snow speaks Spanish and is now a law professor at the University of San Diego.

She said the council needed to do a better job communicating with the



**Blanca Lopez-Brown**



**Alysson Snow**

community, especially if officials want to re-introduce a sales tax. Any proposal needed to come with more specifics about how money would be spent, she said.

Snow reported income from the Legal Aid Society, a nonprofit law firm, and Snow Productions, her husband’s construction company.

Snow raised more than \$7,800, the highest amount in the race, public records show. She received support from current councilmembers Mendoza and George Gastil, who is not up for re-election, as well as other attorneys. She had about \$1,300 left last month.

### Blanca Lopez-Brown

Blanca Lopez-Brown brings experience in education and child care.

A former member of the Lemon Grove School Board, Lopez-Brown said her leadership there helped create a workplace where leaders could civilly disagree.

“We’re so divided right now,” yet council members do “have the same desires for our community,” the 60-year-old said.

Lopez-Brown said more should be done to boost revenue to hire more sheriff’s deputies. The city needed to court new businesses and share costs of new projects with other organizations, similar to the coalition that once helped the school board build a new library, she said.

Lopez-Brown added that she’d need more time to study the budget before she’d know if a sales tax was necessary.

The candidate has lived in the Lemon Grove area since 2000 and bought a home in the city in 2019, she said. She ran for a seat on the San Diego City Council in 2013, and later spearheaded an effort to exempt some small businesses from minimum wage increases. Both efforts were unsuccessful.

Lopez-Brown reported income from the Lemon Grove Childcare Center, which she directs.

She raised more than \$4,400 and recently had about \$500 left, records show. Lopez-Brown gave her own campaign about half its total.

[blake.nelson@suniontribune.com](mailto:blake.nelson@suniontribune.com)