



La Palabra

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The League of Women Voters of New Mexico, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Table of Contents

	Page
President's Message	2
Local League News from the Presidents	3-6
Victory at New Mexico Supreme Court	6-7
Natural Resources Report	8
LWVNM Bylaws Changes	8
LWVNM Calendar -2016/2017	9

To subscribe to the "Action" mailing list (low-volume), the subscribe address is

lwvnmaction-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

When you get an email back from the list, hit your "reply" button, and you'll be in. Only use "Reply" if you want everyone on the list to see your post; otherwise, just copy and paste the email address of the person to whom you are replying. Please be careful to post non-partisan messages of general interest only. Thank you for your interest and cooperation.



Workshop

How to be an Effective Citizen Advocate at the Legislature

Saturday, December 10, 2016 - 10 AM to noon
New Mexico State Capitol #322, Old Santa Fe Trail
Sen. Peter Wirth, Rep. Jimmie Hall, Minda McGonagle

League Day at the Legislature

Wednesday, February 8, 2017 – 5:30 PM
Reception at Garrett's Desert Inn

Thursday, February 9, 2017 – 8 AM to 5 PM
League Day at the Legislature
Educational events 10:30 AM to noon

President's Corner



No League member needs to be reminded about how important this election is. After the many months of hearing presidential and down-ballot candidates arguing, one wonders how the winners will be able to work together on the pressing needs of our nation and communities. The cynicism about the capability of government to resolve burning issues is understandable, but it suppresses the vote and puts representative democracy at great risk. The influence of moneyed interests will prevail unless we counter the impression that all candidates are corrupt and government doesn't work. The decisions that will be made by our national, state, and local lawmakers will affect the quality of life of individuals and the nature of our democracy whether we like these decisions or not.

League members and other groups have been very active in promoting voter registration. Now we need to make sure that voters get to the polls on or before Election Day. To ensure that they can make informed choices, the League's Voter Services Committees have worked for months contacting candidates for their responses to our questions and compiling other information for our voter guides. Our voter guides are online, published in local newspapers, and available in public places, such as libraries, community centers, and colleges.

Voters may not be aware that the League compiles the information on tax consequences and projects covered in the General Obligation Bonds in cooperation with the NM Department of Finance and Administration. We also summarize and translate into everyday language the background information on the Constitutional Amendment proposals and the pros and cons prepared by the NM Legislative Council Service. The Secretary of State's Elections Bureau appreciates our efforts and links to our voter guides through their home page: <http://sos.state.nm.us/>. Please direct voters there if they do not know their polling information. Our

state and local League voter guides are available through our website <http://www.lwvnm.org/VGuide2016/>. The Elections Bureau Chief has reassured us that paper copies are allowed in County Clerk offices and polling places.

In the closing weeks, we ask each League member to reach out to neighbors, colleagues, and strangers to ask them to vote. Please make a special effort to reach Millennials who are turned off and discouraged about their ability to live The American Dream. We also need to know that many eligible voters will not turn out unless we and other groups succeed in convincing them that their voice matters. If necessary, please offer rides to polling places. We know after the election that the rhetoric has to become somewhat more civil in order for lawmakers to build consensus and govern!

- Meredith Machen
LWVNM President
Voter Services Chair



Suffragist Alice Paul leading celebration of Tennessee's ratification of the 19th Amendment.

Local League News

LWV Central NM

LWVCNM held the annual Calendar Planning meeting in July to identify 2016-17 meeting topics, emphasizing speakers offering perspectives on LWVUS priorities included in “Campaign for Making Democracy Work”:

Protecting Voters

(Voting Rights, Improving Elections, DC Voting Rights)

Educating and Engaging Voters

(Registering Voters, Educating Voters)

Reforming Money in Politics

(Money in Elections, Ethics & Lobbying)

Defending the Environment

(Clean Air Defense, Global Climate Change, Clean Energy)

Fourteen LWVCNM members attended and identified 23 potential speakers/topics covering both current election issues and LWVUS priorities for unit meetings scheduled between September 2016 and June 2017.

Jo Porter, who chaired the LWVCNM Voter Guide Committee for 19 years, moved to Colorado in September. Karen Wentworth, Janet Blair, and Amber Gray have assumed the Voter Guide leadership role. LWVCNM members have again dedicated long hours of diligent preparation of Voter Guide questions for candidates for each elective office. Repetitive communication with candidates was necessary to ensure that the questions transmitted on August 10 were received and that the candidate responses were timely. Multiple sessions were required for the meticulous proofreading of responses, with seventeen CNM members participating. LWVCNM anticipates the October 6 distribution of 30,000 Voter Guides.

Several LWVCNM members participated in the Women’s Equality Day observance on the Albuquerque Civic Plaza on August 26, organized by National Organization for Women (NOW) ERA Task Force.

In July, the Albuquerque Police Department (APD) Forward coalition documented concerns

regarding two critical issues of the police reform process: (1) the recently circulated APD “Under Use of Force Memo” followed by the APD Forward meeting with city officials; and (2) the failure of the City of Albuquerque to properly support the Community Policing Councils (CPC). The diverse community member representation desired on CPCs is hindered by the required 12-week participation in Citizens’ Police Academy, a background check, and required Police Ride-Along experience. APD Forward addressed CPC membership concerns in writing to APD, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the six CPCs. CPCs and the City of Albuquerque held community briefings at the six CPC meetings scheduled during August to explain APD initiatives for improvement and to present the APD perspective regarding progress against Consent Decree Measures. APD Forward hosted a PolicyLink and the Center for Policing Equity Public Listening session on September 22 at Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless. PolicyLink is interfacing nationwide with community organizations where troubled policing practices have escalated. Albuquerque Listening Session topics have included policing, transparency, and accountability.

LWVCNM Programs held between August and October 2016 highlight current events and timely election issues. In August, Paul Stokes addressed election integrity and indicated that voter suppression, not voter impersonation (Voter ID), is the issue of concern. Wayne Johnson, Bernalillo County Commissioner, District 5, discussed the November ballot initiative: “Bernalillo County Home Rule” during the September Luncheon Unit. Olin Bray led the member discussion of BREXIT: Britain’s exit from the EU during the September 2016 Evening Unit. Former NM House Majority Leader and Education Chair Rick Miera presented “Public Education in NM, Ranking and Impact on the Economy” to the September NE Heights Unit. October programs scheduled include Viki Harrison, Executive Director of Common Cause, addressing voter protection; Public Regulation Commission (PRC) Chair Valerie Espinoza presenting “Overview of the (PRC) and NM Efforts to

address the US Clean Power Plan.” LWVCNM scheduled the LWVNM Charter School Regulation Consensus Meeting for the October 18 Evening Unit to optimize member participation.

-Karen Douglas, Co-President

LWVSFC Report

Santa Fe Activities Showcase Volunteers' Talents

Volunteers are the lifeblood of organizations such as the League. For a plethora of reasons, people step up to provide expertise, time, and energy to further our mission. Perhaps they like the sense of community. Perhaps they feel the well-researched boost in their health from involvement with a cause greater than themselves. Perhaps the League's mission has strong personal meaning for them. Regardless of their motivation, we are enormously grateful for their involvement. And recent activities have provided a showcase for the wide range of proficiencies that the Santa Fe League finds itself fortunate to have at its disposal.

Recent candidate forums were well organized, professionally managed, comfortably set up, and conducted with civility and appropriate structure. A number of volunteers participated in the planning and implementation of these events that are so important for our voter education strategy. Special recognition belongs to our Director of Voter Services for untold hours of preparation, including the sometimes futile attempt to line up candidates.

League members who are former teachers as well as other volunteers committed to bringing young people into the democratic process worked tirelessly over the last few weeks to complete a well-designed voter registration campaign in Santa Fe's high schools. The effort garnered rave reviews from educators across Santa Fe.

A sub-committee of the LWVSFC Development Committee spent hundreds of hours planning and staging the first ever “Wine, Women, and the Vote” event. The picnic, which celebrated the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, featured an award-winning Santa Fe band, wonderful food, and a raffle that

included a number of fine dining venues in Santa Fe, plus local businesses. Despite a turn in the weather to cold and rainy, the people in attendance were warm and glowing in their praise of the event.

You are in for a treat if you visit the newly-redesigned LWVSFC website. With input from LWVSFC Board and committee members about content, our Director of Digital Experience has created a user-friendly experience that also enables the site to appear high on many search engines. As one new member said publicly, “It's the most easily navigable and professional site I have ever seen done by a group of volunteers.” Next in our sights is a revitalized Facebook presence.

The first public event of our leadership year was a forum that featured Santa Fe Mayor Javier Gonzales and Beth Beloff, Sustainable Santa Fe Commission Chair. Visit the LWVSFC website and view the August issue of *The Voter* for wonderful pictures of the event and a recap of the content.

Watch the LWVSFC website for future postings of the date and site of each month's “Libations with the League,” a no-host Happy Hour designed to offer our large number of new members the chance to have a meet-and-greet with established League volunteers and to learn more about the community they have chosen to become a part of. Feel free to come and join us for engaging conversation and casual interaction.

As you can readily see, our LWVSFC activities do, indeed, showcase the “volunteers of many talents” that we have in abundance here in Santa Fe.

-Suzanne Schmidt, President

LWVLA Report

The activities of the last two months mostly consisted of continued planning for the Voter Guide and the candidate forums. The Voter Guide will be published on October 6 and will be distributed to all Los Alamos County residents and businesses. The Los Alamos County Clerk's Office will also include a link to the Voter Guide on their website.

Our candidate forums will be held on October 6 and October 13 at UNM-LA. The first forum will include candidates for District Attorney, Probate Judge and the NM State Representatives, as well as a pro and con discussion of the proposed charter amendment to eliminate the County Sheriff's office. The second forum will include the candidates for U.S. Congress, County Council and County Clerk.

The LWVLA board voted to approve the bylaws amendment to bring Article III Section 2A into agreement with the LWVUS and LWVNM bylaws.

The board also voted to adopt an Empty Chair Policy that will allow candidates whose opponents decline to appear or cannot appear to not only make a statement but to take questions from the audience. We feel that this will enhance our ability to serve and educate our voters.

We held a very successful Lunch with a Leader in August. Karen Kendall, long-term board member of the Los Alamos Co+op Market, and Tim Morrison, newly hired General Manager, talked about the future of this important asset to our community. Kendall and Morrison acknowledged that 2015 was a difficult year due to poor hiring decisions that led to low morale and monetary losses. However, things are looking up in 2016 with morale on the upswing and the Market looking to break even for the year.

I attended a wonderful event hosted by the Anti-Defamation League in Santa Fe on August 4. The event included leaders from the NM Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the NAACP, the Mexican American Legal Defense & Education Fund, the Native American Voters Alliance, Common Cause NM, the NM Islamic Center, and the SW Women's Law Center. And I was very happy to be there representing the League of Women Voters of New Mexico. We look forward to partnering with these groups in voter advocacy and voter registration efforts in the future.

Opera singer Soloman Howard was honored at the event for his portrayal of both Frederick

Douglass and Martin Luther King, Jr., in the Philip Glass opera "Appomattox" at the Washington National Opera. Howard also thrilled us with his wonderful bass voice, singing a couple of beautiful hymns.

It was truly inspiring to be at a gathering where people of different religions (Christians, Jews, and Muslims), different ethnicities and different races (whites, African-Americans, Muslim-Americans, Hispanic-Americans), all came together to voice their concern about any laws that restrict access to voting and to support efforts to fully reinstate the provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

-Wendee Brunish, President

LWVGLC Report

Our summer and fall have been filled with planning activities for the general election, as well as the ongoing activities of various study and action committees – affordable housing, education, immigration, and youth engagement. In addition to the regular Voter Services activities of voter registration and development of the 2016 Voter Guide, our League has been actively collaborating with several community groups to expand and enhance programming:

- Doña Ana County Bureau of Elections Election Advisory Council – register voters at local high schools during the week of National Voter Registration Day activities, September 26-30, 2016.
- Las Cruces Sun News – publication of the 2016 Voter Guide, October 14.
- NM Comunidades en Accion y de Fe (CAFÉ)' – provide Spanish edition, 2016 Voter Guide.
- KRWG-TV – NM Legislative Candidate Forums (6) – September 13, 20, 21, 27, and October 11, 18.
- Doña Ana County – Doña Ana County Candidates Forum (1) October 4.
- Immigration Forum – Las Cruces, community-wide – September 29.

Our monthly meetings for the past three months have included:

- July – Lisa La Rocque, Office of Sustainability, City of Las Cruces
- August – 2nd Annual Fiesta Showcase of Priorities
- September – Mary Feldblum, Ph.D., Executive Director, The Health Security for New Mexicans Campaign

Interest in U.S. Immigration policy has continued in our League beyond the caucus experience at the LWVUS Convention, June 2016, Washington, D.C., in two tangible ways:

- Development of a letter to U.S. Attorney Damon Martinez (New Mexico District) to serve as a template and shared with other interested members in other states.
- Support for and participation in the planning and implementation of the “Immigration Forum,” a free, public, community-wide program on immigration policy with legal, economic, ethical aspects, to be held at Las Cruces City Hall on September 29.

This has been a challenging calendar of activities, but our League continues to be energized and engaged.

-Gwen Hanson, President

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

“Nunca dude de que un grupo pequeño de personas comprometidas, con pensamientos positivos, puede cambiar al mundo. De hecho, es lo unico que lo ha cambiado.”

-Margaret Mead

LWVNM Victory at the New Mexico Supreme Court



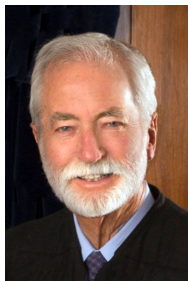
On September 14, the NM Supreme Court heard oral arguments on the League of Women Voters of New Mexico vs. the Advisory Committee to the NM Compilation Commission case, known as “the school elections case.” The League argued that the electorate actually did approve Constitutional Amendments in 2008 and in 2014 allowing school elections to be held at the same time as other non-partisan elections. The League contended that only a simple majority was required rather than a super-majority since no voting rights would be restricted by the amendment. The League maintained that it is a convenience to voters to hold school elections at the same time as other non-partisan elections. It increases turnout, so that more of the electorate has an opportunity to choose who will serve on their school boards and to make funding decisions. Voter participation is fundamental to our representative democracy, and education is the keystone.

The League was supported by several other organizations, including the NM Association of Counties on behalf of the NM County Clerks, Common Cause New Mexico, Disability Rights New Mexico, and the Drug Policy Alliance. Senator Daniel Ivey-Soto, a member of the League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico, was the League’s pro-bono legal counsel.

The Supreme Court agreed with the League, determining that the New Mexico Constitution allows school elections to be combined with other non-partisan elections. Following the same line of reasoning, they also decided that the 2010 Constitutional Amendment #3 had passed. That amendment removed the archaic and offensive language denying “idiots” and “insane persons” the right to vote, and made it clear that felons can have voting rights restored, as state law allows but the Constitution seemed to forbid.

The Legislature still must pass a law allowing school board elections to be scheduled at other times than odd-numbered years in February. Eventually all nonpartisan elections can be held at the same time, cutting costs and increasing turnout.

-Barbara Calef



Message from New Mexico Supreme Court Chief Justice Charles Daniels to LWVNM President Meredith Machen after League prevailed in voting rights case, September 14, 2016.

“Great credit goes to you and your allies who caused this to happen by taking on a mission that you were not compelled to do, to seek to change the law where you realized it needed to be changed, to persevere despite setbacks, and to find a way to overcome obstacles placed in your way and present a new and sound theory to our court. Our democratic form of government can succeed only if citizens make the time to be informed and the trouble to interact with the justice system and all other parts of their own government.”

President’s Note:

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico is truly honored to be part of judicial history with this precedent-setting decision on behalf of voters. Never again, unless our state Constitution is changed, will any ballot item relating to elections require more than a simple majority to pass if it expands the rights of voters. A formal Supreme Court Precedential Opinion is in the works. Senator Ivey-Soto explains, “That Opinion will be released in a few months and will analyze how the decision sets a precedent that will affect all future decisions concerning voting rights.” We thank Senator Ivey-Soto for his leadership and service, and we deeply appreciate the support from the NM Association of Counties, Disability Rights NM, Common Cause NM, the Drug Policy Alliance who filed amici curiae to our case. You can read more about the unanimous decision at http://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/nm-supreme-court-affirms-amendment-ending-ban-on-idiot-voters/article_bccc0ead-49e3-5d69-85d9-2dc48d42e064.html

League v Advisory Committee Supreme Court Order Granting Relief” issued September 21, 2016, requires Article VII, Section 1A of the NM Constitution to now read:

Article VII-Elective Franchise

Section 1. Qualifications of voters; absentee voting; school elections; registration

A. Every person who is a qualified elector pursuant to the constitution and laws of the United States and a citizen thereof shall be qualified to vote in all elections in New Mexico, subject to residency and registration requirements provided by law, except as restricted by statute either by reason of criminal conviction for a felony or by reason of mental incapacity, being limited only to those persons who are unable to mark their ballot and who are concurrently also unable to communicate their voting preference. The legislature may enact laws providing for absentee voting by qualified electors. All school elections shall be held at different times from partisan elections.

(As amended November 7, 1967, November 4, 2008, November 2, 2010, and November 4, 2014, as directed by N.M. Supreme Court Order No. S-1-SC-35524, approved September 21, 2016, in State of N.M. ex rel. **League of Women Voters of N.M. v. Advisory Comm. to the N.M. Compilation Commission, 2016-NMSC**)

-Meredith Machen



Natural Resources Report

In 2013 the New Mexico Environment Department adopted a new water rule called the “copper rule” that allowed copper mining companies to pollute groundwater underneath their mine sites. LWVNM and many other environmental organizations objected that the new rule was adopted without public input and contrary to the state law.

On September 28, the NM Supreme Court heard arguments from the state Attorney General’s Office and the New Mexico Environmental Law Center that the rule violates the NM Water Quality Act. They argued that the rule relaxes regulations and enables wide-scale pollution, threatening aquifers that provide water to residents. Representatives of the NM Environment Department responded that with the rule in effect, the department could tailor regulations to suit specific conditions on a case-by-case basis.

Chief Justice Charles Daniels said the court would take the arguments under consideration, but he didn’t give a date when a ruling could be expected.

-Barbara Calef

LWVNM Bylaws Changes



At the LWVUS Convention in June, the LWVUS Bylaws were amended to remove the requirement that full members be citizens and to reduce the age for full membership from 18 to 16. The bylaws of state and local Leagues are required to conform to those of the national League. Because this is a conforming amendment, it is not necessary to bring this issue to all members.

The LWVNM Board approved the following changes in wording in two motions on July 16 and September 24.

III. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Eligibility. Any person who subscribes to the purposes and policy of LWVUS shall be eligible for membership.

Section 2. Types of Membership.

Voting Members. [~~Citizens of at least 18~~] Persons of at least 16 years of age, [~~residing within New Mexico~~] who join the League shall be voting members of local Leagues or state member-at-large (MAL) units, and of LWVNM and LWVUS.

Article XIV. AMENDMENTS

These bylaws may be amended at any Convention by a two-thirds vote provided that the proposed amendment was submitted to the state board at least ten weeks prior to the Convention by a local League, state MAL unit or has been proposed by the state board. The state board shall send all such proposed amendments together with the recommendations of the board to the membership at least 30 days prior to the state Convention.

If LWVUS changes any of the first three Articles of their Bylaws, LWVNM may change its Bylaws without a vote, and present at the next Convention.

-Barbara Calef

LWVNM BOARD CALENDAR 2016-17

2016

- Nov 12 LWVNM Board meeting, Socorro, 10 am –2:30 pm
- Dec 7 Deadline for Winter La Palabra
- Dec 10 Workshop: *"How to be an Effective Citizen Advocate at the Legislature," 10 am -12 noon, State Capitol, Room 322*

2017

- Jan or Feb Program Planning local Leagues (LWVNM positions review)
- Jan 21 LWVNM Board meeting, 11 –2:30 pm, Santa Fe
Legislative Priorities and Convention Planning
- Feb 8 Wed Legislative Reception, 5:30-7:30 pm, Garrett's Desert Inn
- Feb 9 Thurs League Day at the Legislature, Panel: 10:30-12, Garrett's Desert Inn
- Mar 1 LWVNM Program Planning Report due
- Mar 11 LWVNM Board meeting, Santa Fe
- March 14 Deadline for Spring La Palabra
- May 21-22 LWVNM Convention, Santa Fe
- July 15 LWVNM Board meeting, Albuquerque
- July 18 Deadline for Summer La Palabra

LWVNM Board meetings are on Saturdays and are open to all members. To add agenda items, please write to leaders@lwvnm.org. Send La Palabra articles to Barbara Calef at act@lwvnm.org AND Meredith Machen at president@lwvnm.org. We welcome your participation.

2017 LEGISLATIVE SESSION DATES

- January 17 Opening day (noon)
February 16 Deadline for introduction of new legislation
March 18 Session ends (noon)



**League of Women Voters of NM
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Please consider helping your local League or LWVNM to pay for our upcoming voter guides and candidate forums. You can send a tax-deductible gift by check to your local League or to LWVNM. See www.lwvnm.org for more information and links to our local Leagues. Thank you for making democracy work!

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that helps the public play an informed and active role in government. At the local, state, regional and national levels, the League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Anyone 16 years of age or older, male or female, may become a member. The League of Women Voters never endorses candidates for office or supports political parties.