



# 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
<b>President's Message</b>	2
<b><u>LWVNM Reports and Updates:</u></b>	
<b>Federal Public Lands Report</b>	3-4
<b>The Sagebrush Rebellion</b>	5
<b>Natural Resources Report</b>	6-7
<b>Advocacy Workshop Information</b>	7
<b>Immigration Update: DACA</b>	8-9
<b>League Lobbyist Information</b>	9
<b>Nuclear Waste Study Comm. Report</b>	10-12
<b>Local League News</b>	12-15



**Fall colors, New Mexico**

## *President's Corner*



Greetings, Fellow League Members:

The Leagues at all levels are very busy these days. The state League is moving forward with three studies, and members are welcome – and encouraged - to join one of the study teams. The study on federal land transfers to states is progressing, and members are finding interesting history and current developments (see article in this issue). The nuclear waste storage study is also progressing along with a proposal to the Department of Energy to fund an update of the earlier Nuclear Waste Storage Primer (see the article in this issue). Local Leagues will be hosting events on this topic in the next several months. Stay tuned for updates on the health care study.

This month the NM Public Education Department has issued unfortunate proposed revisions of the Next Generation Science Standards. The revisions strike certain facts about the age of the earth, evolution, and influences on climate change. If the proposal is adopted as is, the standards will not be scientifically accurate. The League plans to comment on the proposed rule. You, as individuals, can comment as well. The notice of the public hearing, scheduled for October 16, and comment period on the proposed New Mexico STEM-ready science standards can be found at <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/ped/PublicNotices.html>.

Submit comments until 5 p.m. PM October 16 at [rule.feedback@state.nm.us](mailto:rule.feedback@state.nm.us). Astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson has said that the denial of science and evidence is the beginning of “the unraveling of an informed democracy.”

The good news is that the NM Secretary of State has adopted a rule that addresses disclosure of campaign donations and defines coordination among entities such as PACs and campaigns.

campaign finance and reporting. The new rule will improve transparency in election financing and is intended to align with the New Mexico Campaign Reporting Act.

At the federal level, we have all been watching the many actions being taken by the administration that, if successful, will adversely affect New Mexico and New Mexicans. They are almost too numerous to fathom. They include changes in health care financing and provision; overturning of DACA; building the wall on the Mexico border, just to name a few. The administration can accomplish other goals without assistance from Congress such as downsizing two of our national monuments, reversing the EPA clean water rule and fracking rules. One wonders how anyone can be opposed to clean air and clean water – many of us are old enough to remember the horrible smog and burning rivers of the 1960s and 1970s.

LWVUS is urging us all as individuals to contact our legislators, and in some cases, committees. They have urged us to call the Pence-Kobach “sham” Election Commission and tell them to stop suppressing the vote. Call your congressperson and tell them to fix, not destroy, DACA. Visit [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org) to see what the League is doing and learn about advocacy opportunities.

**Political Activity.** Recently I participated in a LWVUS leaders’ webinar about political activity by League members. A number of states had raised questions about what to do with the pesky household members who wanted school board election yard signs, to work in election campaigns, and to make political donations. President Chris Carson described the LWVUS board policy, and said League members are expected to be engaged in the political process, but some should not be involved in partisan politics.

The president and Voter Services chair may not be involved in or donate money to political campaigns. Some Leagues also say that “visible” board members should stay away from politics. Significant others, family members and other household members can’t be restricted – if they want to put up yard signs or be involved, they can do so.

*Judy Williams, LWVNM President*  
[president@lwvnm.org](mailto:president@lwvnm.org)

## Report from the Transfer of Federal Lands Study Committee

The transfer of federal public lands study committee now numbers ten participants. For this issue of La Palabra we have reviewed the history of the major government legislation concerning public lands from 1812 to the present.

Initially the federal government was focused on developing the land that it acquired. Congress established the General Land Office (GLO) as part of the Department of the Treasury to survey, manage, and dispose of public lands. The GLO was transferred to the newly established Department of the Interior in 1849.

The effort to promote settlement of the West was stymied by the southern states, who feared the creation of new non-slave states would diminish their political power. However, when those states seceded, the federal government was able to move forward with plans that had been under consideration for some years. In 1862 President Lincoln signed the Homestead Act, which offered private individuals the opportunity to acquire ownership of 160 acre tracts if they paid a small filing fee and continuously resided on and cultivated the land for five years.

Beginning in 1862 Congress passed several laws intended to promote the construction of a trans-continental railroad in order to further facilitate the development of the western territories. The legislation granted land for the actual tracks as well as adjacent sections (a section is a square mile or 640 acres), and low interest loans to the railroad companies. Land grants were intended to be sold to settlers to help pay for the construction.

*Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century government policy regarding federal public lands began to change with the growing awareness that the country's natural resources were being depleted.*

Other efforts to dispose of public land included the General Mining Act in 1872, which offered to sell mineral-bearing land for \$2.50 to \$5.00 per acre; the Desert Land Act of 1877 to encourage the development of land that lacked timber or minerals and could only be cultivated if irrigated. Both of those acts are still in effect; however, Congress shortened the list of minerals to which the mining act applies by passing the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, which mandates that lands containing deposits of coal, petroleum, natural gas, and certain other resources be leased rather than sold and royalties collected.

Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century government policy regarding federal public lands began to change with the growing awareness that the country's natural resources were being depleted. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) had its beginnings in 1876 as a forestry study tucked away in an appropriations bill as seed distribution money for the Department of Agriculture. The forest reserves that were subsequently created were administered by the Department of the Interior until 1905 when President Theodore Roosevelt transferred their care to the Department of Agriculture's new U.S. Forest Service.

The U.S. Fish Commission, later the Bureau of Fisheries, was created in 1871 under the Department of Commerce to study the decline in stocks of food fish and recommend a solution. In 1885, the Division of Economic Ornithology and Mammalogy, later the Division of Biological Survey, was established under the Department of Agriculture to protect bird and mammal habitat throughout the country. (Rachel Carson worked for them for 15 years.) In 1940 the Bureau of Fisheries and the Division of Biological Survey united to become the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service under the Department of the Interior.

Ranchers had free access to the public lands managed by the General Land Office for grazing until 1934 when Congress passed the Taylor Grazing Act in response to over-grazing and soil deterioration. The law instituted a permitting system for all public rangeland similar to that in effect on Forest Service lands. The U.S. Grazing Service was established to administer the provisions of the act.

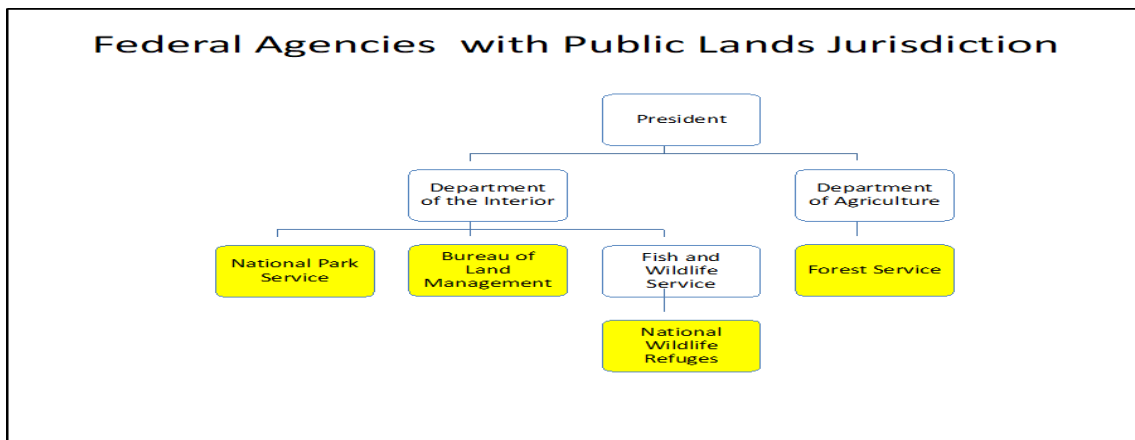
The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was created in 1946 within the Department of the Interior by combining the General Land Office and the U.S. Grazing Service. The BLM manages about 1/8 of the landmass of the country; and also manages subsurface mineral estates located beneath federal, state and private lands that were severed from their surface rights by legislation.

Several important regulations further protect natural resources on public lands. The Wilderness Act of 1964 calls for the preservation of specific areas on Forest Service lands where the forces of nature could operate unrestrained and unaltered (cattle still graze there). The 1970 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), requires that all executive federal agencies prepare environmental assessments and environmental impact statements stating the potential environmental effects of proposed federal agency actions. And the Endangered Species Act of 1973 was designed to protect critically imperiled species from extinction caused by human development.

The Federal Lands Policy and Management Act (FLPMA, flip-ma), which was passed by Congress in 1976, governs the way in which the public lands administered by the BLM are managed. It repealed most of the earlier laws pertaining to the disposal of federal public lands. FLPMA declared that public lands are to be retained in federal ownership, unless it is determined through a specified planning procedure that disposal of a particular parcel will serve the national interest. The act calls for “management of the public lands and their various resource values so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people.”

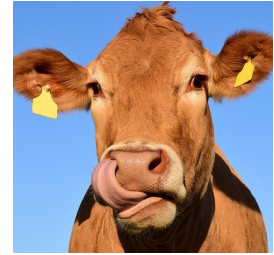
In the Winter 2018 issue of La Palabra we will discuss the current policies of the USFS, BLM, and USFWS and review the Utah Land Transfer Analysis.

—Barbara Calef, Co-Chair Transfer of Federal Lands Study Committee



## The Sagebrush Rebellion

‘The controversy that led to the Sagebrush Rebellion began over a century ago when the federal government started reserving public lands; it took off in the 1970s. At that time many miners, loggers, ranchers, and politicians at every level of government in the West rose up in opposition to a slew of new environmental laws, from the Wilderness Act to the Endangered Species Act. They were especially angry about the Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976, which formally ended the policy of transferring federal lands to private ownership and adopted a policy of retention of those lands by the federal government.



The rebellion in the 1970s was marked by laws and lawsuits with the goal of transferring federal lands to the state. In 1976 the U.S. Supreme Court, in the case of *Kleppe v New Mexico* the U.S., affirmed the constitutionality of the Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. New Mexico had rounded up and sold unbranded burros on BLM lands. In 1979, the State of Nevada asserted that it owned the Federal land within its borders, with some exceptions such as military bases and national parks. The rebellion ebbed with the election of President Reagan, who was sympathetic and eased federal regulations.



Cliven Bundy

In the 1990s a second rebellion, led by Cliven Bundy, started as a protest against changes to the grazing rules on the BLM land in Nevada where he ran his cattle. Bundy refused to pay the grazing fees, but continued to use the allotment. The neighboring county of Nye County, with advice from Bundy, attempted to take ownership of federal lands through two resolutions claiming ownership to “all ways, pathways, trails, roads, country highways, and similar travel corridors across public lands in Nye County,” and claiming that the state of Nevada owns all public lands within its borders. The state did not support the county’s claims and the U.S. District Court in Nevada granted the federal government’s motion for summary judgment in the case of *U.S. v Nye County*, declaring that the U.S. owned the disputed public lands and had the power to manage and administer those lands. The decision was appealed but not reversed.

In 2014 the rebellion continued when the government began a round-up of Bundy’s cattle, but the officials retreated when confronted by armed protesters. Subsequently two of Bundy’s sons, Ammon and Ryan, led the armed take-over of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon. All three men await trial for their actions in the 2014 standoff.

Legal action has not been mounted in the decades since Nye County, but there has been renewed legislative interest in some states. New Mexico’s legislature has beaten back minority bills to act on public lands transfer, and the Commissioner of State Lands, Aubrey Dunn, partnered last year with the late Pete Domenici to create a plan for lobbying the U.S. Congress in order to secure below-surface mineral and oil and gas rights. Utah passed its Transfer of Public Lands Act (TPLA) in 2012 demanding the federal government transfer public lands by 2014. The federal government has yet to respond.

—Barbara Calef and Judy Williams, *Transfer of Public Lands Study Committee Co-Chairs*

## Natural Resources Report

As the Transfer of Federal Public Land Committee learned (see the report in this issue), the General Mining Act of 1872 is still in effect. Our New Mexico senators, along with three other Democratic senators and Congressman Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), have introduced the Hardrock Mining and Reclamation Act of 2017 to



Zinke, Heinrich, Sen. Tom Udall (D-NM) and other officials take a horseback tour of the Sabinoso Wilderness area in Summer 2017

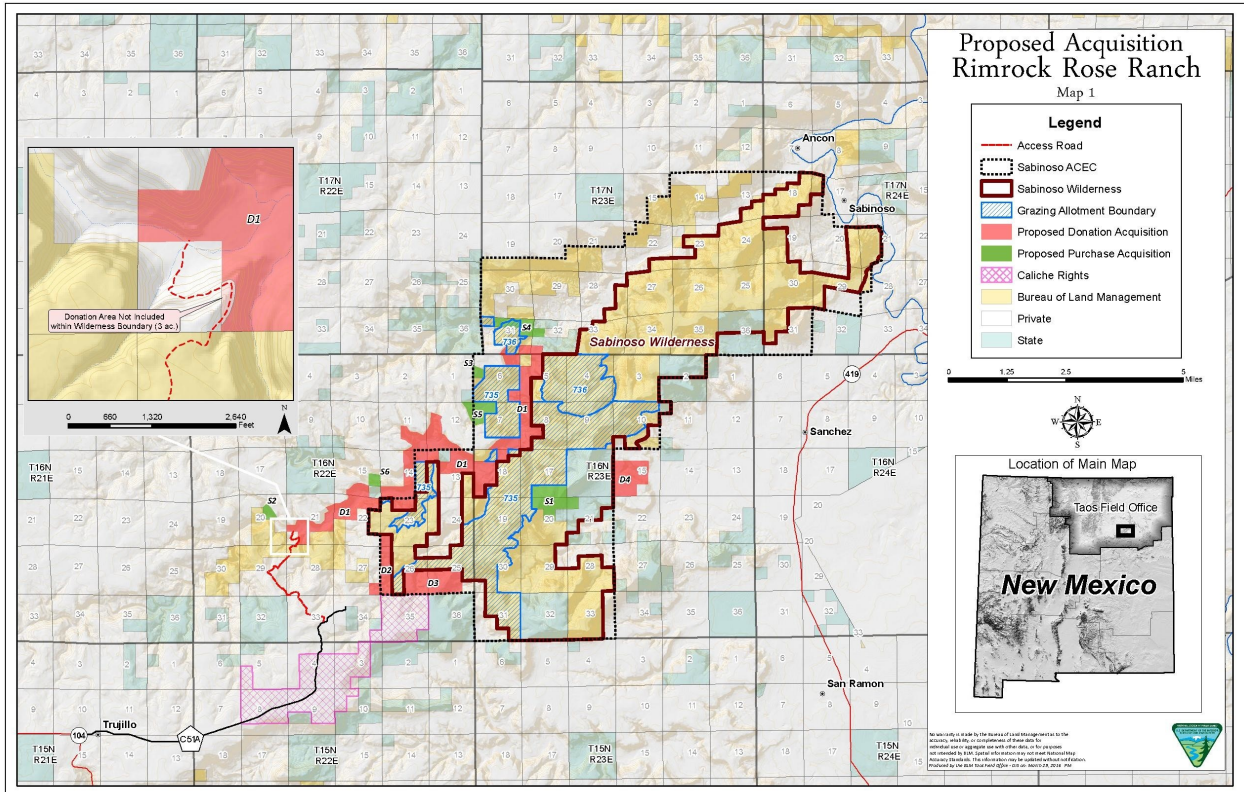
update the law, imposing a royalty on hardrock mining companies for the first time and creating the Hardrock Minerals Reclamation Fund for abandoned mine clean-up to help pay for abandoned mine cleanup and prevent future disasters. Unfortunately, the legislation has no chance of passing the current Congress.

In August U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke submitted his final report on 26 national monuments of greater than 100,000 acres created since 1996 to President Trump. The report has not been released to the public, but was leaked and is available here: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/4052225-Interior-Secretary-Ryan-Zinke-s-Report-to-the.html>

Among the recommendations in the report, Zinke suggested alterations to both the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and Rio Grande del Norte National Monuments. For those and many other monuments, he listed as priorities: public access, infrastructure upgrades, repair and maintenance, traditional use, tribal cultural use, hunting and fishing rights.

The report says road closures at the Rio Grande Del Norte National Monument in New Mexico “have left many grazing permittees choosing not to renew permits.” However, Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM) said he checked with the BLM and learned that any claim that roads have been closed inside Rio Grande Del Norte are “not accurate” and that statements suggesting ranchers have stopped operating inside the national monument are “also not true.”

Zinke’s report says that in one part of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, the Potrillos Mountain Complex, border security “is a concern resulting from the (national monument) designation, as the proclamation restricts motorized transportation close to the border.” Senator Heinrich noted that this statement is not true “because on the recommendation of the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, the boundary of the monument was actually established



five miles north of the international border.” The senator plans to put together a fact sheet “more consistent with the conditions on the ground to be sent to Secretary Zinke.

The secretary also made news recently when he announced that he has given the Bureau of Land Management instructions to complete the process for considering whether the federal government should accept the donation of 3,595 acres – formerly known as the Rimrock Rose Ranch, to be included as part of the Sabinoso Wilderness, located east of Las Vegas in San Miguel County. The addition would allow public access to the Sabinoso for the first time.

—Barbara Calef, Co-Chair Natural Resources Committee

**Advocacy Workshop – Prepare for the 2018 Legislative Session**

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico is sponsoring its annual workshop, Effective Citizen Advocacy at the Legislature.

**Saturday, December 9, 2017, 9:30 to Noon**

**New Mexico State Capitol, Room 322 (enter on the East side only)**

The public is invited. Learn tips from legislators and a professional lobbyist on how to interact with legislators, speak at hearings, and advocate for your cause.

Speakers:

Senator Peter Wirth, D-Santa Fe, District 25  
 Senator Sander Rue, R-Albuquerque, District 23

Jim Jackson, Chief Executive Officer of Disability Rights New Mexico, an independent private non-profit organization authorized through federal law to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

## Immigration Update-DACA

On September 5, 2017 the Trump administration rescinded the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy, which had been in effect since 2012. New Mexico, along with fourteen other states and the District of Columbia, is now suing the Trump administration over its reversal, which did not follow the required process for changing regulations. While the president has the authority to make immigration decisions in the case of national emergencies, there was no emergency in this case.

*"...Reversing the DACA policy will have a devastating impact on our economy. Ending this program will increase unemployment...These individuals are paying taxes, contributing to Social Security and are Americans in everything but the name."*

*—Chris Carson, President, LWVUS*

There is broad, bipartisan, public and business consensus that DACA has served our national interest economically and that it is a humane policy which was implemented because of the failure of Congress to act on immigration reform. League of Women Voters president Chris Carson issued a strong response, quoted in part here. "As a country of immigrants, we are made stronger by our diversity. Yet time and time again, this administration has discriminated against immigrants and communities of color. Reversing the DACA policy will have a devastating impact on our economy. Ending this program will increase unemployment...These individuals are paying taxes, contributing to Social Security and are Americans in everything but the name."



The League of Women Voters is opposed to deportation of non-criminal undocumented immigrants and we urge Congress to pass a clean Dream Act to protect, not turn away, the 800,000 young people who were brought to the United States as children."

### Background Information on DACA

In 2012 President Obama signed an Executive Order called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, allowing eligible unauthorized young people to register with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) if they were brought to the U.S. at a young age. Registering with ICE requires submitting an application, paying a fine, and paying a fee every two years. Those who were granted DACA status have been able to attend school or work without fear of deportation. DACA generated millions of dollars in revenue for all levels of govern-



ment through income taxes, payments into Social Security, property taxes, and sales taxes, to name a few.

President Trump campaigned to get rid of DACA. Once elected, he expressed some ambivalence about the policy, but he buckled when nine state attorneys general threatened to sue the federal government if it didn't close down DACA, which they claimed was unconstitutional. On September 5, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that DACA was to be ended and would be completely phased out by March 5, 2020. He gave Congress six months to develop an alternative. No new DACA applications will be accepted. Those already in the pipeline will be looked at on a case by case basis.

Among the bills introduced in Congress to address this unnecessary crisis is one filed by Senators Lindsay Graham (R-S.C.) and Dick Durbin (D-IL). SB 1615, called the Dream Act of 2017, would allow children of immigrants who entered the U.S. unlawfully to eventually earn citizenship if they graduate from high school, seek higher education, serve in the military, or work lawfully for three years. They must pass security checks, pay fees, demonstrate English proficiency, and not have committed a felony.

Unfortunately, Congress has failed to agree on the Dream Act since it was first filed in 2001, but efforts to help Dreamers have broad support among Americans, so we are cautiously optimistic this time. LWVUS has authorized Leagues to contact their Congressional delegations to express opposition to deportation of non-criminal undocumented immigrants and urge them to pass a clean Dream Act.

—Meredith Machen, Immigration Chair

## Would you like to be a lobbyist for the League?

During the 2017 Legislative session the number of members who were able to lobby for the League grew significantly. This raised the visibility and effectiveness of the League. During the 2018 session we would like to further increase the number of people lobbying for the League. With the changes in the lobbying regulations, members who speak for the League no longer have to register as lobbyists.

If you volunteer, the League will provide training and testimony to present on the legislation being heard. Often that testimony is a condensed version of what is contained on the LWVNM Factsheets.

If you so desire, the League can also pair you up with an experienced lobbyist to get you started. Contact me at [act@lwvnm.org](mailto:act@lwvnm.org) if you would like to find out more about being a lobbyist for the League.

—Dick Mason Action Committee Co-Chair

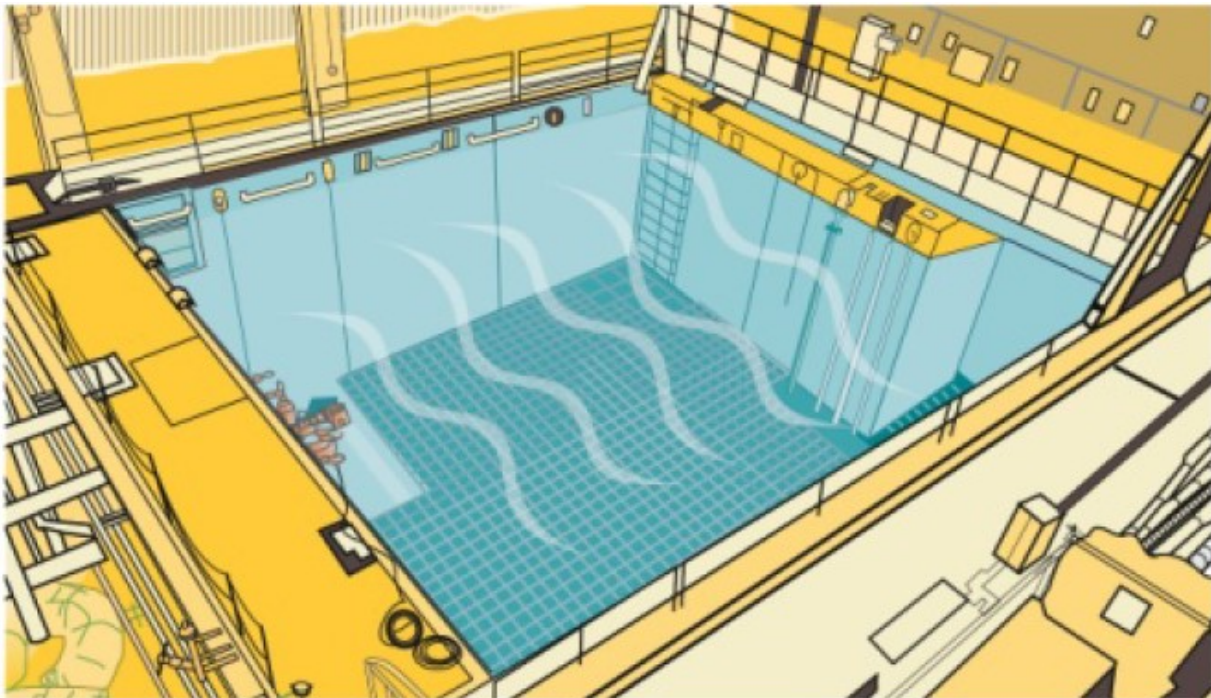


LEAGUE OF  
WOMEN VOTERS®

## Nuclear Waste Study Committee Report:

Does the League support the development of consolidated interim storage sites (CISF) for spent nuclear fuel?

This is the key question that LWVNM will answer as part of the recently-launched Nuclear Waste Storage study. The question is important and timely. The permanent site that was supposed to be built at Yucca Mountain in Nevada has been placed on hold because of opposition from Nevada politicians and residents. Currently, most spent nuclear fuel is stored on site at the nuclear power plants where it is generated, in special pools as illustrated below. The fuel rods, which are illustrated in the next picture, are placed in the pools for storage.



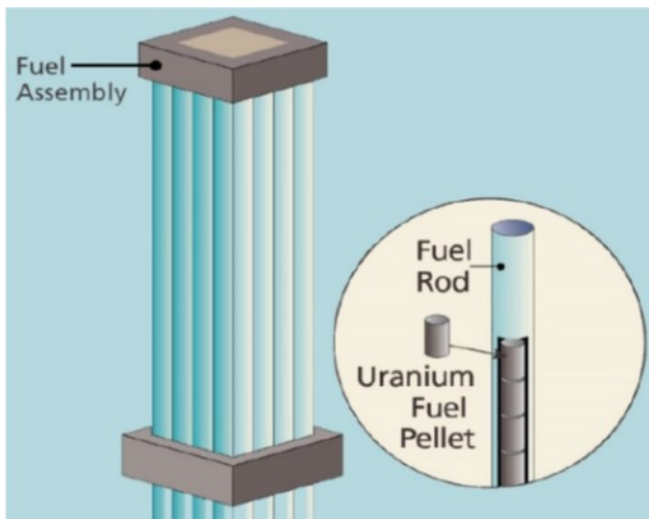
There are 63 of these Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installations (ISFSI) scattered across the U.S. as of January 2017. In addition, there are 15 sites that accept fuel from other facilities. The nuclear industry has paid some \$30 billion into a fund that was supposed to be used to create a permanent repository for nuclear waste, but because of the controversy around Yucca Mountain, we are a long way from achieving this.

Spent nuclear fuel refers to the bundles of uranium pellets encased in metal rods that have been used to power a nuclear reactor.

Over time, the uranium fuel becomes used up and is less able to keep a nuclear reaction going. Every so often, about one-third of the fuel in a reactor must be replaced. The spent fuel is still highly radioactive and hot, and must be stored so that the rods are cooled and don't leak radiation. The ISFSI sites are highly regulated by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and they have an excellent safety record. However, there is limited capacity at these sites to continue storing spent fuel. Some of them are located in urban areas and can't be expanded.

As a longer-term but still temporary measure until the permanent site can be developed, two interim storage facilities have been proposed, one in New Mexico and one in far west Texas. As explained in the summer La Palabra article, these are referred to as Consolidated Interim Storage Facilities (CISF). The proposed New Mexico site would be located between Carlsbad and Hobbs. The west Texas site is located in Andrews county near the New Mexico border and the application has been suspended because it is the subject of a lawsuit by the state of Texas.

The New Mexico site application is moving forward. A company called Holtec International, in partnership with the Eddy-Lea County Energy Alliance (ELEA) has filed for the necessary permits and is far along in the process. The company would develop the ELEA HI-STORE CIS site using advanced dry storage technology.



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The site would initially contain 10,000 storage canisters, which translates to approximately 120,000 metric-tons of spent uranium fuel. According to the Nuclear Energy Institute, the nuclear power industry currently generates about 2,000 metric tons of waste each year and has produced a total of 76,430 metric-tons of waste over the past 40 years. Thus, the ELEA-HI-STORE site could store all the spent fuel generated to date and have space for another 20 years or so of waste. However, interim in this case means until Yucca Mountain or an alternate Permanent Geologic Repository is able to accept the spent nuclear fuel. It could be more than 20 years and it is possible that interim storage will need to continue for more than 100 years. Thus, one criterion for interim storage is whether the capacity can be expanded at the site.

Before the League can answer the fundamental question posed in the title of this article, we will study the safety and security aspects of consolidated interim storage vs. the status-quo in which there are dozens of storage sites. The spent fuel would have to be transported to the interim site and the League will study the safety considerations with transport. Transport of nuclear waste is highly regulated and to date there have been no accidents that resulted in the release of nuclear waste or radiation. We will also evaluate the risk of exposure to radiation from the interim site and the potential health impacts.

There are also economic impacts to be considered. Would the HI-STORE site provide a boost to the economy of southeastern New Mexico? Stay tuned for more information in future issues of La Palabra on this ambitious and fascinating study by LWVNM. In addition, the LWVNM Nuclear Waste Storage committee will be giving presentations to local Leagues about the study.



**Dry casks have thick shielding to protect workers and the public from radiation**

—*Laura Atkins, Nuclear Waste Study Committee Member*

## **Local League News:**

### **From the Santa Fe County League Leadership Team:**

League members all over the state are asking about the Santa Fe County League leadership team. The concept of having our local league, League of Women Voters of Santa Fe County, governed by a team rather than a president has been difficult for many members to comprehend.

First, here is a little background information. At our Annual Meeting, held on May 5, the Nominating Committee recommended that “we” or “the membership” accept a restructure of the LWVSFC to form a management team approach to achieving its mission and goals. By vote of the membership present, the Nominating Committee’s recommendation passed.

The Leadership Team is outlined in the organizational chart below. From that team has been formed a Board of Directors who met twice over the summer. The board members are: 1st Vice President Marcy Litzenberg, Secretary Susan Herder, Treasurer Berit Leonard, Director Laura Atkins, Director Ann Coulston, Director Coleen Dearing, Director Miriam Ries, and Immediate Past President Suzanne Schmidt. On July 6, 2017, we had a retreat to better define the roles and responsibilities of each of the Board of Directors positions and to ensure that the responsibilities of the president and other board responsibilities under the old structure are covered, as summarized below:

- Provides leadership to ensure financial soundness and compliance with bylaws, policies, reporting requirements, etc.
- Approves and oversees LWVSFC’s structure and governance

- Provides fiscal oversight and budget management direction
- Sets program priorities for the year and monitors progress
- Obtains necessary resources for organizational needs
- Represents and promotes LWVSFC in the community
- Ensures compliance with “the League speaks with one voice”
- Approves LWVSFC’s participation in community collaborations
- Supports membership recruitment and engagement, leadership development, and succession planning
- Coordinates with the LWVNM via an official Liaison

Key committees and chairs are:

Administration Committee - Chair Marcy Litzenberg

Member & Program Services - Chair Laura Atkins

Membership – Chair vacant

Voter Services - Chair Ann Coulston

Communications - Chair Donna Reynolds

Action & Advocacy - Chair Hannah Burling

The organization chart summarizes the new structure.



There are some positions specified in our bylaws that are not filled and will remain until the bylaws are re-written and adopted. The Leadership Team will continue to meet monthly at the New Mexico Bank & Trust on St. Michael’s Street. Board meetings will be posted on the web-site and are open to any interested member who would like to attend.

—Laura Atkins, LWVSFC Liaison to LWVNM

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## League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico

Members of the LWVCNM have been busy with the Albuquerque Mayoral and City Council elections scheduled for October 3, 2017. Questions were sent to all candidates with responses limited to 80 words, which were incorporated into the *Voter Guide*. The *Guide* also includes the several bond issues as well as an initiative for workplace sick day policy. The *Guide* is already online at the LWVCNM web site ([www.lwvcnm.org](http://www.lwvcnm.org)). The printed version will be distributed widely to all public libraries, community centers, educational institutions and other businesses or organizations throughout the city.

More than a dozen candidate forums have been held, several moderated by League members. At the League office we have had many election-related phone calls, especially from citizens looking forward to having the *Voter Guide*. The Albuquerque City Clerk, however, did not support distribution of the *Guide* to early voting sites, stating that the *Guide* included responses from the various candidates and therefore was considered to be inappropriate for use at voting locations.

Processes are underway to engage our new members, with board members identifying a wide number of volunteer opportunities that will strengthen our ability to serve voters.

This summer the luncheon unit has hosted speakers who addressed 1) redistricting issues, 2) civics lessons effective in capturing the imaginations of high school youth, 3) voter protections, and 4) Citizens United issues. Upcoming for the La Vida Llena morning unit will be a presentation on the Equal Rights Amendment.

LWVCNM board members are currently exploring ways to incorporate social media into our outreach, both to our own members and to the voting public.

LWVCNM will celebrate Voter Registration Day on September 26th by holding a registration event at the Central New Mexico Community College campus.

## Los Alamos League Report

Stephanie Garcia Richard, our state representative, spoke to the Los Alamos League about the 2017 legislative session and the special session. She said she has learned that almost all bills take more than one session to pass and being a legislator requires long hours of hard, frustrating work, year-round.

In August Becky Shankland and I attended an Albuquerque luncheon sponsored by the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition. The guests represented a cross-section of New Mexico residents from academia, business, and non-profit organizations. Senator Udall was the featured speaker, but the message from all of the speakers was that investments by the U.S. and non-profits in international aid, in addition to diplomacy and, sometimes, military assistance, can make the US more secure and benefit New Mexico's economy due to increased foreign trade.

Douglas Carver was the Lunch with a Leader (LWL) speaker in August. He had asked to speak to our League about ethics commission legislation. He explained that he had supported a very detailed joint resolution in the 2016 session to avoid the risk that statutes passed separately may be overturned in the future, which is what happened to Wisconsin's model Ethics Advisory Board.

Now his concern is that the much vaguer ethics commission resolution that passed the legislature this year (and will be a constitutional amendment on the 2018 ballot) will be ineffective unless strong enabling legislation is passed quickly. He is working to assure that the enabling legislation does get written and passed.

Carver's fear is that, if the enabling acts are not passed in a timely manner, we will have an impotent ethics commission. He noted that in the Legislative Ethics Committee, all complaints go into the ethics process, but nothing goes public until the committee holds a hearing. Even the number of complaints is protected by confidentiality. That committee has held no hearings since it was created in 1994!

On September 7th, the Los Alamos League held a social gathering for members and friends. About 39 people showed up, including some new members and quite a few people interested in joining. In addition to socializing, we got some advice on lobbying from our member and legislative assistant Tarin Nix.

Jennifer Sublett and Lynn Bjorklund, the speakers for the September LWL, work for the U.S. Forest Service. Their talk included a history of the Forest Service with a focus on the Santa Fe National Forest and a summary of the legislation that shapes the agency's policies and procedures.

*--Barbara Calef, LWVLA Co-President*

## **LWV GREATER LAS CRUCES**

The LWVGLC has been busy as usual. The Youth Engagement Committee (YEC) has been working overtime preparing for the 18-24 year-old voter participation study. They have also been researching and meeting with various school administrators about having the schools adopt a civics curriculum. Erika Graf-Webster, chair of the YEC, presented two proposals (which passed) at the September board meeting: 1) to offer League Internships and 2) to establish a Champion of Civic Engagement Award for students who demonstrate outstanding civics engagement through working with the League or another public entity.

The Observer Corps is up and running. We have members attending meetings of five different government agencies on a regular basis and reporting key happenings.

The Program Fiesta (Sept. 11) was an opportunity to showcase all that we do and have a little fun in the process. The Creole Dixie Land Jazz Band played for us and they were so good that they even inspired a few of us to dance! We have over a hundred names on the Membership Involvement Sheet. These are members who are currently involved or have expressed interest in being involved in specific LWVGLC activities. This is an impressive testimony of members' commitment to furthering democracy and improving our community.

On September 16, The Election Advisory Council (EAC) sponsored "A Community Conversation: Democracy in Doña Ana County." Gwen Hanson, Erika Graf-Webster and I are all members of the EAC. We helped plan and participated in the event, the purpose of which was to have a conversation with voters, especially those who vote only in the general elections. With an average of just 9% voter turnout in local elections, the League and the EAC need to figure out what we can do differently to create a voting culture.

Finally, I want to give a huge welcome to Christine Sorg as our new Vice President.

*—By Kim Sorensen, President GLC*



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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](http://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.