



League of Women Voters of New Mexico

La Palabra

Vol. 70 No. 2

www.lwvnm.org

Fall 2023

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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.



The Co-Presidents' Corner

By Kathy Brook and Hannah Burling
LWVNM Co-President
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Once again we find ourselves in election season, this time at the local level. Please think about ways in which you might encourage friends and family, especially new voters or

potential voters, to engage in the process. If you are on social media, consider sharing posts from the League and use your voice to push back against mis- and disinformation.

Remember that you can find live webcasts and recordings of meetings of interim legislative committees at www.nmlegis.gov. You can easily skim through agendas of the meetings to find topics that interest you and then view relevant portions of the videos to learn more.

Many members are working to move the League forward. Special thanks go to Edwina Jaramillo for her work on VOTE411 at the state level, to Lora Lucero for facilitating the filing of a Federal Action Request (FAR) with LWVUS to support resolutions in Congress pertaining to the climate crisis, and to Karen Douglas for her continued efforts on the nuclear issues study. Finally, congratulations to Barbara Calef for being recognized as a Living Treasure in her community.

Kathy Brook

The Election Integrity Project is a loosely organized group of nonprofits and businesses continuing the work of the 2022 Democracy Project. Like the Democracy

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Project, it is facilitated by New Mexico First and LWVNM is a partner. The goal is to reassure voters that their ballots are secure, their choices matter and our election process works. For the 2023 elections, we have filmed county clerks and other election officials talking about the security and honesty of our voting procedures. Eighteen people participated: fourteen speaking in English, three in Spanish and one in Navajo. These will be disseminated both in audio and

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Voter Services Report

By Edwina Jaramillo

The Voter Services (VS) Committee has met four times and will meet again on September 19. The meetings were held to inform of important election dates, to share information with and between the local Leagues, discuss possible issues/concerns/procedures with VOTE411, and inform about communication needs and templates for GOTV and VOTE411 available on the LWVUS website. I also met with the Communications team on 8/10/23.

This year we implemented a new process (to avoid input errors by varying individuals from local Leagues and those inputting for the state-covered counties) whereby our hired intern uploaded information to VOTE411 on the backend. Specifically, she initially set up all known races from the 2019 Secretary of State Proclamation of Races including race categories and GIS districts by uploading GIS files. Additionally, she uploaded race descriptions and candidate questions developed by the local Leagues and the counties for which the state will be covering. Once the 2023 Proclamation was released, the races on the Proclamations were compared and corrected for each League.

A Vote411 Production Schedule was developed for an at-a-glance document to inform of important dates and to ensure all VS Directors were on the 'same page'. All local Leagues and the state are on schedule to send questionnaires to candidates this week with responses anticipated in the next 2 weeks. Several of the local Leagues have very tight print deadlines for their Voter Guides prior to early voting (starting October 10th) that, I understand, is the norm.

We are also obtaining GIS files, race and candidate information for races that are occurring outside the November 2023 elections, i.e., those of several irrigation districts.

GOTV and VOTE411 Communication/Publicity: During the last election our intern developed a social media calendar for posting GOTV information in September and VOTE411 information in October for a coordinated communication strategy between the local Leagues and LWVNM. This year we do not have anyone in that role. While the local Leagues are taking on this responsibility locally, there is a need for an individual or team to coordinate publicity/communication state-wide. Additionally, there is need for assistance with printing costs for Voter Guides by the local Leagues. In summary, we can 'get by' for the 2023 local elections but if we are to inform the electorate and have an impact on the 2024 election, a coordinated communication strategy will be needed as well as assistance with League printing costs for Voter Guides.

The Presidents' Corner ...from page1

video form on television, radio and social media throughout the election season. This is a part of the League's ongoing work to combat mis- and dis-information and to encourage voting.

The LWVNM Education Fund, an associated 501(c)(3) organization, is up and running. We will be raising funds for much of the educational work of LWVNM. We are currently developing and refining our policies and procedures. Our board consists of Hannah Burling, LWVSFC, President; Kim Sorensen, LWVSNM, Secretary/Treasurer; Rebecca Chaiken, LWVLA; Jody Larson, LWVSFC; Meredith Machen, LWVSFC; Karen Wentworth, LWVCNM; and Felicia Orth, LWVLA.

Hannah Burling



2023-2024 Action Calendar

2023

October 12: Legislative Council Service Presentation on the Budget and Taxes – 10 a.m. at State Capitol and Zoom

November 29 – Legislative Finance Committee Director Charles Sallee on Reserve and Revolving Funds – 6:30 p.m. via Zoom

December 5 – Representative Christine Chandler on Potential Gun Safety Legislation - 6:30 p.m. via Zoom

December – Resume Weekly Action Zooms

2024

January 2- January 12 - Legislation may be pre-filed

January 6 – Advocacy Workshop - 10 a.m. to noon via Zoom

Senator Hemphill, Representative Harper and Linda Siegle (lobbyist)

January 11 – Legislative Prep Zoom for members – 6:30 p.m. via Zoom

January 16 - Opening day (noon)

January 24 - LWVNM Reception - 5:30 to 7:30

January 25 - League Day at the Legislature

February 15 - Session ends (noon)

March 6 - Legislation not acted upon by governor is pocket vetoed

LWVNM Nuclear Issues Update

By Karen M. Douglas

The LWVNM Nuclear Issues Study Committee is progressing toward completion of their reports. More than fifty references were distributed to participants with additional supplements from task members. The references for each section will be included in the bibliographies for improved evaluation by members. Five-page study reports with bibliography including links to references for each of the four tasks will be available in November for League members to review in preparation for the consensus meetings in December (1 evening and 1 weekend). In addition to these resources, the Study Committee is considering including two video interviews featuring nuclear industry professionals representing opposing views regarding the necessity of nuclear power to combat climate change. If the Nuclear Issues Study Committee deems these two videos as offering a balanced perspective, these will also be available to LWVNM members.

The four tasks approved by the April 2024 LWVNM Convention delegates include:

1. **Summarize the current contribution nuclear energy provides as both a baseload (constant ly available) and a greenhouse gas-free source for domestic/international energy production.**
2. **Identify deterrents to nuclear energy expansion and any proven and effective remedies (consider the LWVNM Spent Nuclear Fuel Storage Safety Position adopted in 2021).**
3. **Consider the current U.S. energy situation and domestic nuclear plant status, including closures, with related impacts on states.**
4. **Evaluate newer advanced reactor concepts with enhanced safety features and efficiency with related implementation status.**

The Study Committee task leaders will also propose consensus questions for approval during the November 18

LWVNM Board meeting and will select the dates and times for the two December consensus meetings. If consensus is reached at the December meetings, the Nuclear Issues Study Committee will draft a position statement and seek approval from the LWVNM Board at their January 20, 2024 meeting.

LWVNM members will be notified of study committee documents and interview access in early November and later provided with the consensus questions and zoom links to attend one of the two December consensus meetings.

.Bringing the NM Legislature Into the Current Century, cont'd

by Judy Williams

The NM Legislature is considering various approaches to improve legislative functions. These include paying legislators, longer sessions and more staff. These all require legislation and/or appropriations. As the League has pointed out for years, there are also many administrative improvements that could be made.

In the 2023 legislative session two constitutional amendments were considered: one to create a commission to establish legislative salaries, and another to change the length of the legislative sessions. Both ultimately failed. The appropriations bill did include funds to study increasing staff for legislators, either at the capitol or in their districts.

The Legislative Council Service (LCS) has awarded a contract to Focus Group to study legislative staffing. They will look at whether more committees need staff, whether it's feasible to have staff in the districts, and related issues.

In addition to Focus group, the LCS has contracted with other organizations for sections of the project:

- Focus Group is looking at staffing in six other states.
- Research and Polling (Brian Sanderoff) is polling legislators and staff. They have apparently had a pretty good response so far.
- Architectural Resource Consultants is looking at office space around the state.
- The National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL) is researching other states.

A draft report will be provided to the Legislative Council on October 16.

The Legislative Finance Committee has established the Legislative Modernization Subcommittee, which met in Albuquerque on Sept. 28. On the agenda were two presentations of interest: "Professionalization of the New Mexico Legislature" report by the UNM Bureau of Business and Economic Research; and "Overview of Staffing Patterns for State Legislators" by NCSL staff.

Common Cause is planning to convene at least one focus group of NM residents.

The only constitutional amendment that is likely to be introduced in 2024 is one to create an independent salary commission. This would open the way to establish salaries for legislators. The New Mexico legislature is the last unpaid legislature in the nation, according to the NCSL. This year the joint resolution for the amendment is likely to start in the Senate, where there has been opposition. The House supported it in the last session.

Last year's resolution (HJR8) was quite lengthy, causing some concern. Plans are to narrow the scope of the actual amendment language, and to count on enabling legislation to fill in the details. The group working on the issue plans to have a draft by the end of 2023.

Update on the New Mexico Water Issues for the 2024 Legislative Session

By Norm Gaume, President of the Water Advocates; and Jeanne Logsdon, LWVNM Environment Committee

Water supplies for New Mexicans are substantially diminished and will decline at least 25% more by 2070, according to a recent authoritative report prepared by the NM Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources. New Mexico's top scientists predict climate change will raise average temperatures by 5 to 7 degrees by 2070. Higher water losses due to evapotranspiration and desiccation caused by the increase in temperatures are already driving increased water scarcity.

Actions to address this stark realization began several years ago as we discovered drought is not the right concept to describe New Mexico's increasing aridification. Today's "drought" is the near-future's normal. The State Engineer appointed diverse water experts and representatives across New Mexico to the 2022 NM Water Policy and Infrastructure Task Force to analyze the complexities of problems and possible remedies. The group reached remarkable consensus on a broad set of recommendations that were considered by the 2023 legislature. (The Task Force report is available at <https://nmwater.org>.) The legislature passed unanimously and the Governor signed path-breaking legislation, the Water Security Planning Act, which requires a regional community-driven approach to water conservation and distribution. But how will this act be implemented?

NM Water Ambassadors (former Task Force members) and the Water Advocates have identified actions that are required of the 2024 legislature to implement both the Water Security Planning Act and the Task Force consensus recommendations. One top priority is to give enforcement powers to the Office of the State Engineer to stop illegal water use, which is prevalent. This authority will mirror the powers that the NM Environment Department has to enforce against pollution. A bill to provide for enforcement authority was discussed and passed by the Senate Conservation Committee in 2023, but it stalled in the Senate Judiciary Committee. The Governor supports enforcement and is expected to include it in her Call to the 2024 legislature.

Actions to address this stark realization began several years ago as we discovered drought is not the right concept to describe New Mexico's increasing aridification.

The other priorities are for increases in appropriations to fund new staff positions and programs. The State Engineer's office and Interstate Stream Commission are still suffering from slashed budgets and staff cuts. Additional staff and modernization are necessary to implement existing water laws and take actions required for New Mexico to survive increasing water scarcity. The Water Advocates recommend funding for 20 new positions each year for three years. A good way to remain informed about water issues and remedies is to participate in the Water Advocates workshops on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 6:30 pm. (See <https://mrgwateradvocates.org>.)

Adequate appropriations are required to implement past legislation that has never been fully funded. For example, the 2004 Active Water Resources Management program, upheld by the NM Supreme Court in 2012, cannot be implemented in the regions where it is most needed. Another example is the 2019 Water Data Act, that would create accurate and comprehensive information on water resources in a database available to water agencies, interested parties, and the public.

How can New Mexico make good decisions if it doesn't have accurate, actionable information describing regional water budgets that show present water supply and water demand? Groundwater availability and unsustainable depletion rates must be measured. Four state water agencies have the responsibility to clean up their

data and make it readily available for problem-solving. The water agencies, as data generators and owners, have begun using 2023 appropriations to figure out the big picture. The Water Security Planning Act requires the state to provide the best available data, science, and models as the basis for planning to adapt to increasing water scarcity. However, still more funding is needed. Informed planning requires more and higher quality measurements throughout New Mexico.

LWVNM has been a strong supporter of sound water policies for decades, and now is the time to consider whether water is a priority issue for advocacy in the 2024 legislative session. If it is, then we should evaluate the bills and strongly support the best proposals.

Education Report

By Meredith Machen, LWVNM Education Committee Co-Chair

Ongoing Concerns

New Mexico's public schools have not made sufficient progress in fulfilling the requirements of the 2017 Yazzie-Martinez court decree. In spite of millions of dollars in increased education spending and many improvements in policies and programs, New Mexico is still last or close to last in academic achievement. With NM Attorney General Raul Torrez taking over the management of the Yazzie-Martinez suit, we should expect better compliance by state and local agencies in implementing policies and more progress than we've seen in five years. New Mexico is wasting millions on litigation-related costs that could go towards programs and services.

Progress

In the past few years, we have successfully advocated for increasing salaries for teachers and educational staff, free meals in schools, early childhood education and childcare funding, Opportunity Scholarships, teacher fellowships, and loans for service to address workforce shortages in high need areas. We have also successfully advocated for funding for programs to improve academic achievement through tutoring, supplemental support services, increases in instructional hours, more effective special education services, and better English as a Second Language instruction.

In 2021 and 2022 LWVNM participated in the updating of the Public Education Department's (PED) revised social studies academic and content performance standards. For years we pushed for financial literacy to be a graduation requirement. While a stand-alone course was not adopted, we're pleased that 33 distinct personal financial literacy performance standards are now embedded in the new social studies courses across all grades (6.29.11 NMAC). Educators are being trained how to teach personal financial literacy content and how to access free high-quality classroom resources.

Initiatives

The governor is calling for \$30M to be invested in an institute to promote Structured Literacy programs, and to conduct virtual teacher training. Legislators are also responding to the call from colleges, businesses, and the laboratories to address our dismal math and science proficiency levels. At long last, New Mexico seems to be committed to improving math and science achievement. Thanks in large part to the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC), PED is now partnering with several organizations on strategies to improve math and science teacher education and instructional support for students.

For more information, see <https://www.nmlegis.gov/Entity/LESC/Default> and the links to individual LESC Interim Committee meetings. Click on "Committee information" for agendas, handouts, and presentations posted before and after committee meetings.

The most important task of the LESC this interim is to organize the recommendations of the working group evaluating the efficacy of the Funding Formula to garner consensus on changes that will be presented for committee endorsement of legislation that will be submitted to the legislature at large for passage in the 2024 session.

Local League News

Los Alamos Report

By Felicia Orth, President

In the past, questions for the Voter Guides and candidate forums were developed by a subcommittee of the LWVLA Board and then voted on by the board as a whole. In July, the board agreed with Jean Dewart's suggestion to invite all League members to assist in the development of questions. Only one League member not on the board responded and provided assistance; Jean hopes that future races will see a better turnout by our members.

The Los Alamos County Rodeo Parade was held on August 12, and Ellen Mills's vision this year was to recognize future voters. She created a new banner and invited youth to march in the parade. The Los Alamos League, with voters and future voters of all ages, was well-represented in the parade.



Emily Xu and Alyssa Sun carry the Future Voters banner for LWVLA in the Rodeo Day Parade. Photo by Maire O'Neill.

Los Alamos County Clerk Naomi Maestas invited League members to join her to accept the proclamation to honor National Voter Registration Month from the County Council on August 29; Jody Benson and Felicia Orth were present. Naomi also invited us to assist her office in registering voters on National Voter Registration Day, September 19, and we did so. The National Park Service invited us to attend and register new U.S. citizens at the naturalization ceremony held at Bandelier National Monument on September 17. Lynn Jones led that effort as she has in past years, joined on this occasion by Barbara Calef.

Our August 17 Lunch with a Leader featured Allan Saenz, a successful entrepreneur originally from Costa Rica, who has been living in Los Alamos for the past 18 years. He is the founder and owner of several businesses, including Los Alamos Network, which provides internet services to the community, and is also responsible for the recent renovation of our movie theater, The Reel Deal. He transformed it into the SALA Event Center and made it into a vibrant community event hub. His visions for the future of SALA include immersive experiences and educational training for students interested in working in the film industry.

At our annual meeting in April, the membership voted to approve a study on pit production at LANL led by Jody Benson. Jody has had minimal response to the emailed invitation to help with the study. She plans to send out a second invitation and hopes to attract more participants and begin the work.



Two Living Treasures at the ceremony on September 10: Becky Shankland and Barbara Calef. Photo by Craig Martin (also a Living Treasure and a League member).

We will host a candidate forum for the community on October 5, and have invited all candidates for the two races for the Los Alamos Public School Board and the UNM-LA Advisory Board. Short presentations on a school bond and on the new election laws will also be made.

Finally, we all knew that Barbara Calef is a "Living Treasure," and now the rest of the world knows it too! A ceremony honoring Barbara and two others in the community was held September 10. Barbara's children flew in from New Hampshire and Maui to celebrate with her; many League members were there as well. Congratulations, Barbara!

LWVSNM Report

By Jo Galván Nash & Kathe Kanim, Co-Presidents

Board Business: SNM is in need of a Treasurer. Ours was quite good but her fulltime career has taken priority. Our board is desperately searching for someone to manage the books. Meanwhile, we are continuing to update our portfolio (job) descriptions and have completed fresh versions for the Youth Engagement Director and the Historian. We also had several League volunteers registering voters at the US District Court's Naturalization Ceremony in mid-September. SNM is always present during these ceremonies when hundreds of new U.S. citizens take their Oaths of Allegiance.



The volunteers included LWVSNM members.

Committee Activities: As the rest of the state is doing, Voter Services is burning the midnight oil to help with Vote411; we're calling the candidates in five southern counties to encourage them to participate. Plus, SNM is placing advertising and social media posts to promote awareness prior to publishing 22K+ copies of the printed Voter Guides in English and Spanish. And, our candidate forums, co-hosted by League members, will once again be televised by PBS in Las Cruces.

Meanwhile, the active LWVSNM Affordable Housing Committee has been called upon to give strategic direction to a consulting company hired by the City of Las Cruces on how to prioritize general obligation bonds for affordable housing. The League Committee was incredibly active in advocating for bonds in the city's 2022 bond election and will now share recommendations on how the city should put the \$6 million into action.

Otero County Unit: Members of the Otero County unit are organizing an upcoming candidate forum. It will be the first forum conducted by the new SNM unit. Otero is also continuing to work with Alamogordo-area Girl Scouts as the students work on their democracy badges. Otero members are coordinating guest speakers, potential field trips, and other activities to get the girls civically engaged.

General Meetings: SNM had a good turnout at our August General Meeting, attended by guests of the local



Librarians from (left to right) Anthony, NM, Alamogordo and Las Cruces presented to the League and the American Association of University Women during a panel discussion

American Association of University Women and the Las Cruces Branigan Library Board of Directors. The topic was focused on one of our programs – The Future of Libraries. SNM is currently updating its Position Statement on libraries, and this marked a good step in collecting current data on how libraries exist in today's world. The librarians described a variety of ways they provide assistance, from answering questions about city and county services, to notarizing documents, to lending out technology or assisting with IT.

In September our General Meeting focused on developing our legislative priorities, which will be presented to Doña Ana County lawmakers in December.

Central New Mexico

By Donna Sandoval, President

LWVCNM Retreat

The board participated in a facilitated retreat on September 9, 2023. Our facilitator, Mindy Young, started us off with the guidelines and expectations for the day. We participated in a variety of timeboxed and upbeat activities designed to meet the following outcomes:

1. A shared understanding of the current state of the organization
2. An assessment of our organization against basic success factors
3. A categorization and prioritization of our goals
4. A gap closure plan

At the end of the session we found that our time should focus on the goals of Vote411, Succession and Recruitment, Member Engagement and Annual Fundraising. The board will try to organize our efforts going forward in these areas; we will have shorter board meetings and spend more time on our goals.

Monthly Educational Meetings: Proposed Program Topics

Please note: As new issues arise through the course of the year or a proposed speaker is not available, topics may change.

- September: Albuquerque Community Safety Department: The Right Response at the Right Time
- October: Municipal Elections 2023, Part One: The Issues
- November: Municipal Elections 2023, Part Two: The Answers
- December: Clean Energy Options – Should LWV Include Commercial Nuclear Power? In-depth Exploration of the Nuclear Study

LWVCNM Book Club

Join us for the third meeting of the League Book Club and a chance to share ideas with other League members. While it is great to finish a book selection, if you run out of time, please feel free to attend and follow along during the discussion. Book Club coordinators Janet Kirkpatrick, Mary Mulvany, and Laura Downing invite you for lively discussion and conversation.

Date: Wednesday, October 25, 2023, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Location: LWVCNM Office Conference Room, 6739 Academy Road NE

Title: *The Persuaders – At the Front Lines of the Fight for Hearts, Minds, and Democracy* by best-selling author Anand Giridharadas: As described on the author's website, "*The Persuaders* is a stunning insider account of activists, politicians, educators, and everyday citizens who are on the ground working to change minds, bridge divisions, and fight for democracy." Please RSVP to Janet via phone or text at 505-401-2052.

Santa Fe County

By Jody Larson, Liaison

We have 150 members as of August 15, with quite a few engaged in various activities, serving on the Action and Advocacy Committee, or working on Voter Services or fundraising.

At our meeting August 15, our board approved Voter Guide questions for a great many positions that will be on the ballot this fall, including the Pojoaque/Santa Fe Soil and Water District, the Eldorado Water and Sanitation District, the Edgewood Town Committee, and the Española and Pojoaque Public School Boards. The League's general election pamphlet has been edited by our County Clerk. Once completed, the pamphlet will be translated into Spanish and submitted to the *New Mexican* to be published as the League's election insert. Voter Services is receiving requests for its materials from a variety of groups. There are other publications that will be offered

to the public with the League's logo that show our commitment to getting good and accurate information on elections and other material to the public.

Voter Services members are also uploading candidate information and working on getting letters with the Voter Guide questions to the candidates. Many positions are contested within the City of Santa Fe, as well as elsewhere in the County. Our Voter Services Chair, Kelly Davis, and others are also working with LWVNM VOTE 411 Committee to prepare the database for the November election. We will hold forums in October, and we will again partner with the NAACP to canvass neighborhoods with traditionally low voter turnout.

Our High School Civic Engagement Project is moving along well. A teacher at the NM School for the Arts has agreed to develop a voter registration/education unit to present to seniors in September/October. We have been updating the list of participating teachers, making connections, and developing promo materials to introduce the effort to teachers. We have arranged for the County Clerk's office to train/certify student VRAs and will work with the history teachers in various high schools to select the students for VRA certification. We will provide additional training to ensure that they are prepared to help students register to vote. Our goal is not just to register, but also to inform.

We will hold several general meetings around the theme of water this year. In the course of planning these, we have learned that Santa Fe County does not have a water department or a specific person in charge of water issues. The city is better staffed in this respect. Other good government groups in town are also working on water-related issues, and we are looking into cooperating or collaborating with them.

Our Action and Advocacy Committee is following many issues within the city, including proposed changes to the City Charter that will be on the November ballot. We are resuming our regular meeting with the City Manager after a summer of conflicting travel schedules. Our regular observer with the County provides very informative reports. Our observer at the SF Public Schools Board meetings has provided details of the board's hearings on the issue of the Fiesta Council visiting the schools. Many in the community feel very strongly about this custom, which has been curtailed in recent years and was recently considered for discontinuance, but the existing policy remained in effect through this Fiesta season.

Please visit our website, www.lwvsfc.org, for updates on the forums and the Voter Guide.



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Please consider helping your local League or LWVNM to pay for our 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.