



La Palabra

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League Contacts

LWVNM

Meredith Machen, President
president@lwvnm.org
505-577-6337

Central New Mexico

2315 San Pedro NE, #F6
Albuquerque, NM 87110
505-884-8441
www.lwvnm.org
Leadership Team:
Carol Tucker Trelease
Peggy Howell
Olin Bray
Karen M. Douglas

Greater Las Cruces

P.O. Box 8322
Las Cruces, NM 88006
www.lwvnlc.org
Gwendolyn Hanson, President

Los Alamos

P.O. Box 158
Los Alamos, NM 87544
505-662-3825
www.lwvlosalamos.org
Barbara Calef, President

Santa Fe County

1472 St. Francis Drive
Santa Fe, NM 87505
505-982-9766
www.lwvsfc.org
Judy Williams, President

La Palabra Editor

Miriam Ries
505-316-0825
mries415@yahoo.com

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.

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Bylaws Approved at Convention



This year at Convention, the delegates adopted all of the proposed bylaws amendments, with only a couple of small changes for clarity. The revised bylaws are posted on the LWVNM website. Comparison with the previous version will reveal a few other changes. I had to re-type the entire document to achieve a consistent format. In the process, I applied uniform principles for capitalization and punctuation, and made some other minor changes.

-Barbara Calef

President's Message



I am pleased to report that LWVNM's biennial Convention was extremely productive and heartening. Delegates from around the state are energized by the commitment of long-time and newer members, and we have begun this League year with an energetic state Board, determined to increase the League's visibility and effectiveness. LWVNM did a beautiful job organizing the arrangements and received kudos from all who attended. Please see accompanying Program and Bylaws articles summarizing the actions taken and the downloadable documents at <http://lwvnm.org/Convention2015/>

Keynote speaker Supreme Court Chief Justice Barbara Vigil expressed her gratitude to the League for our "nonpartisan, grassroots efforts to engage and educate voters and the public-at-large about important issues impacting our society." She joined the League as a young lawyer about 20 years ago and still relies upon the League to provide information she can trust. "Your work is critical to protecting and strengthening our democracy, which can only occur if citizens are well informed and actively participate in this great experiment we call democracy."

As we move toward the 2016 elections, we will be stepping up our efforts to educate the public and improve voter engagement, which has flagged horrifically in recent times. We call upon all League members to spread beacons of light to counter the lack of civility, the increasing polarization of society, and the growing skepticism about the effectiveness of government, especially because of the detrimental influence of Money in Politics (MIP). This fall, all of our local Leagues will

present information from the LWVUS MIP Study Committee's evaluation of current campaign finance legislation and recommendations for improvement. The consensus results will help the League fight against laws that allow special interest groups to secretly funnel millions of dollars into elections by circumventing contribution limits and disclosure requirements. For excellent resources, see <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/money-politics-review>

We are responding to changes in the culture and using technology for timely messaging reflecting our work, but there is no substitute for person-to-person communication. Please augment our outreach efforts by inviting friends and neighbors to attend MIP information sessions, luncheons, forums, and other activities. Please check our website www.lwvnm.org frequently for scheduled events sponsored by our local Leagues. Please write to leaders@lwvnm.org to let us know which issues you are willing to work on with members across the state. Together we will expand our network, strengthen our advocacy efforts, and empower new voters and disengaged citizens.

-Meredith Machen

Local League News

LWVSFC Report

LWVSFC members might be likened to the Energizer Bunny. They just keep going, working almost tirelessly for more responsive and transparent government. Led by a League member, the Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission recently completed its work. The city charter change that established the commission was proposed and advocated for by LWVSFC in 2014. After gathering citizen input on optional district maps presented by professionals, the city now has districts approved by the citizens' commission. This is a system that may become the envy of communities across the nation.

Based on input from the League and others, Santa Fe County is continuing its work on a new Sustainable Land Development Code. The next steps include updating community plans and adopting new guidelines that specifically address regulation of junkyards, landfills, and sand/gravel operations. LWVSFC has regularly made public comments and written op-eds throughout this multiyear process. We hope to see the final code and zoning in place by the end of 2015.

A local LWVSFC study has begun that will identify best and worst practices among local governments that can impact economic development. Research will be extensive, with queries going to other municipalities, economic think tanks, and local civic groups, as well as to city and county departments.

The issue of public financing of local elections was examined at a luncheon in July. The director of Common Cause NM, a City councilor speaking from a candidate's perspective, and a member of City's Ethics and Campaign Review Board outlined and responded to a pending proposal to overhaul the public financing system. The panel was moderated by a League member who was formerly a City councilor.

The visibility of the LWVSFC is wonderfully enhanced by sunshades appearing on windshields around the city and state. Sales of the sunshades, which feature the League logo and an admonition that "Your vote counts," have been brisk. We would be delighted to share information about this enterprise with other Leagues.

Wonder if that bunny's tongue was ever hanging out?? Look at the LWVSFC website to see the program schedule for this year, and you'll wonder the same about LWVSFC volunteers.

*-Suzanne Schmidt, 1st Vice President
(for Judy Williams)*

LWVLA Report

The big news for the Los Alamos League is that I will not be president for life after all. When we requested nominations from the floor at the Annual Meeting, Wendee Brunish, a former board member who recently retired, volunteered to serve as First Vice-President. Hurrah for Wendee! We have four other new board members as well, so we are quite invigorated.

For well over a year, we worked with the Sierra Club to achieve a ban or fee on single use plastic bags (and paper) in Los Alamos. We succeeded in convincing the County Council to direct the Environmental Sustainability Board (ESB) to hold two public meetings to discuss the issue and to return to Council with options for reducing the distribution of single use bags in the County. It turned out that there was extremely strong opposition to any action. A well-organized and vocal group invoking freedom and threatening lawsuits fought us at every step. Strangely, while sneering that the matter was too unimportant to consider, they devoted hundreds of hours to fighting it. We did not give up, but have succeeded only in getting the ESB to pass a motion asking the Council to act to educate and encourage citizens to reduce consumption of natural resources, including plastic bags.

Los Alamos is one of nine owners of the San Juan Generating Station. In June, the League and the Sierra Club were invited to meet with officials of the Department of Public Utilities to hear about the complexity of the re-structuring agreements for the plant. The officials argued that the County would suffer significant financial loss if the plan fails to be approved. They indicated their desire to withdraw from the plant in 2022.

Los Alamos has set a goal to be carbon neutral by 2040. The Future Energy Resources Committee reported to the Board of Public Utilities on July 15 with a definition of carbon neutrality, a recommendation for future

renewable energy resources for our community, and a policy regarding distributed energy generation in the County. Three of the seven members of the committee are League members. The report was highly praised, and we look forward to the next steps toward achieving the goal.

-Barbara Calef, President

LWVGLC Report

As with each new Board, the focus of attention is orientation, organization, and prioritization of work for the upcoming year. Among the priority areas are outreach to reach high school and college student voters and eligible voters, affordable housing, education, and campaign finance.

Our League activities from April through June have been varied. In May, Doña Ana Community College President Renay Scott spoke to League members and guests on "Addressing Workforce Development and Citizenship in Doña Ana County." In June, Third Federal District Judge Robert C. Brack spoke on immigration and border issues.

We continue our collaboration with community partners including the County Bureau of Elections, City of Las Cruces "Neighborhood Expo" voter registration project, and NM Comunidades en Accion y de Fé (CAFé).

The League collaborated with Craig Fenske and Heather Ferguson of Common Cause New Mexico to make a proposal to the City of Las Cruces Mayor and Councilors about public campaign financing for locally elected officials. On July 13, 2015, statements of support for the proposal were made by Gwen Hanson and Erika Graf-Webster.

For her service to the community and to the League, Bonnie Burn was recognized by various groups. She received Mayor Ken Miyagashima's Distinguished Service Award in April. The Bonnie Burn Education Scholarship was established by our local League in conjunction with the Las Cruces Public School Foundation. A \$1,000 scholarship funded by donations from

League and community members was awarded to a graduating high school student enrolled in NMSU's College of Education. Third, Bonnie received a Special Recognition Award from the Las Cruces Public Schools Board of Education in late May.

It has been a great beginning, and we look forward to the challenges of the upcoming year.

-Gwendolyn Hanson, President



Bonnie Burn and Erika Graf-Webster, past presidents, LWVGLC

LWV Central NM

In addition to hosting regular luncheons and meetings on a variety of topics, LWV CNM has been very involved with two important coalitions: APD Forward Coalition and New Mexico Coalition for Choice.

APD Forward Coalition: This broad-based coalition was created in June 2014 to ensure that the Albuquerque Police Department carries out the reforms needed so that it won't be as violent in the future as it has been in the past. The coalition includes such organizations as Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless, American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico, Disability Rights New Mexico, Equality New Mexico, La Mesa Presbyterian Church, the League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico, National Association of Social Workers --New Mexico Chapter, Native American Voters Alliance, New Mexico Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, and Strong Families.

We have met with representatives of the U.S. Department of Justice, APD Chief Gordon Eden, court-appointed federal monitor Dr. James Ginger, and Albuquerque Mayor Richard Barry. The Consent Decree (also called the Settlement Agreement) outlines all the changes that APD needs to make. APD also has a "Coffee with a Cop" program in place so that community members may visit with a police officer.

New Mexico Coalition for Choice: LWVCNM got actively involved with this coalition, which has been active since the 1980's, when the Respect Albuquerque Women Campaign was launched in the spring of 2014. There were people in our state who were trying to outlaw abortion after 20 weeks, implement waiting periods before getting an abortion, require parental consent or notification for a minor to obtain an abortion, and establish TRAP (Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers) regulations. So far, we have managed to avoid all these roadblocks when a woman wants/needs an abortion.

We need to remain vigilant and continue to fend off potential anti-choice regulations and legislation to protect private reproductive decisions from government interference. In conjunction with the LWVNM Action Committee, we will continue to help educate the public and legislators on the safety of both medical and surgical abortions and to counter the false information and fear tactics coming from anti-choice groups.

-Carol Tucker Trelease, 1st Vice President

Note from the Voter Services Chair

The Secretary of State recently announced that the state would not implement a new



voter registration system until after the General Election in 2016. When it is fully operational, the Motor Vehicle Department's new software, Tapestry, is supposed to improve the voter application process and transmission of electronic voter registrations significantly. The media have reported some of the difficulties with the drivers' licenses component that are being ironed out. Of concern is that Tapestry is only available at the regular Motor Vehicle offices, not in the private MVD Express and MVD Now offices. These private offices need to be part of the system if electronic voter registration is going to work.

Elections Director Kari Fresquez says the Secretary of State intends to implement online updates by January 2016 and full online registration by the deadline required by law, January 2017. Meanwhile, several County Clerks report that they are still having issues receiving the paper voter applications completed at MVDs in a timely manner. Many of New Mexico's election reform advocates are eagerly watching the implementation of Oregon's automatic universal voter registration law, and lawmakers are looking into introducing similar legislation here. At this point, we can only hope Tapestry will be able to handle automatic universal voter registration if such legislation is approved in New Mexico.

-Meredith Machen

If you want to keep tabs on statewide issues, join the League's helpful email distribution list. To subscribe to the low-volume "**LWVNM Topics**" mailing list, just send an email to

lwvnmtopicssubscribe@yahogroups.com

When you get an email back from the list, hit your "reply" button, and you'll be in.

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

lwvnmaction-subscribe@yahogroups.com

The process is the same.

San Juan Generating Station

LWVNM has advocated against approval of PNM's proposed plan to replace the power currently provided by the two units of the San Juan Generating Station that are scheduled to be shut down in 2017.

The Public Regulation Commission (PRC) is charged with approving the utility's plan. In April, Ashley Schannauer, a hearing examiner for the (PRC), recommended that PNM's plan be rejected because it lacked information about the amount of coal needed for use and an ownership restructuring agreement. Such agreements are critical for commissioners to adequately assess the costs and benefits of PNM's proposal for continuing operation of the plant.



We opposed the plan in part because the confidential nature of the agreements prevents adequate public scrutiny. Also, we believe the replacement mix of energy resources should include more renewables. In April, we joined other environmental groups asking Attorney General Balderas to withdraw his support.

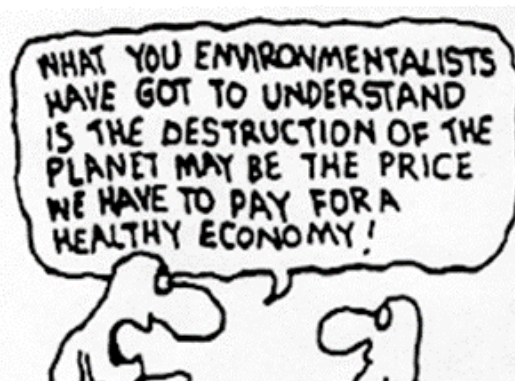
In May, the PRC gave PNM up to two more months to complete various agreements for the continuing operation after two of the four units are closed down and four of the nine owners give up their shares in the plant. One of the pending agreements was a contract with a coal supplier. Commissioner Valerie Espinosa voted against the extension. The PRC has set August 1 as the final deadline.

At the end of May, the LWVNM Natural Resources Committee wrote a letter to the editor again calling on the Attorney General to change his position regarding the plan. He finally did so on June 24, saying that the plan lacks enough renewable energy sources and that costs to ratepayers need to be lowered.

On July 17, the hearing examiner ordered PNM to turn over documents to New Energy Economy (NEE), which opposes the plans for the plant, including communications with state regulators and any records showing whether PNM had a role in arranging meetings between commissioners and a New York stock analyst. Schannauer ruled that it is "in the public interest to provide transparency and full disclosure on this issue."

Supporters of the plan say that if it is rejected by the PRC, the multitude of agreements will fall apart and both the San Juan Coal Mine and the power plant will be closed at great expense to the owners and rate-payers. Environmentalists suspect that is a bluff. Because of the secret nature of the negotiations during the past two years, only time will tell.

*-Barbara Calef
Natural Resources Co-Chair*



Election Modernization

When people from all over the political spectrum enthusiastically cheer the passage of a piece of legislation, you know something was done right.

That's exactly what has happened after the passage of SB 643, an election modernization bill sponsored by Senator Lisa Torraco (R – Albuquerque) during the 2015 New Mexico legislative session. I'm grateful to Senator Torraco for working closely with my fellow election officials and me, as well as legislators across the political spectrum, in order to pass this landmark legislation.



Maggie Toulouse Oliver

The bill didn't receive a single dissenting vote in either legislative chamber. Common Cause NM and the League of Women Voters and other non-partisan groups advocated for it and applaud its passage. My fellow county clerks and I, along with our Executive Director, State Sen. Daniel Ivey-Soto (D – Albuquerque) worked very hard on this compromise bill and are thrilled with it. The Secretary of State and other conservatives praised its passage, and Governor Martinez signed it.

The hyper-partisanship that seems to define so much of our political processes nowadays was thankfully absent when it came to this bill.

SB 643, known as the "Online Voter Registration" bill, was actually a combination of multiple pieces of legislation aiming to modernize our state's election processes, increase electoral participation, and ensure better access for eligible voters.

Once the bill's provisions are fully implemented, eligible voters with valid or expired driver's licenses or state identification cards will be able to register to vote (or update their registrations) online. This will increase voter participation – something that's sorely lacking in our state – because many people forget to update their registrations when they move or are unable for a variety of reasons to timely file paper registrations with voter registrars or at the county clerk's office. There are many groups that vote in lower numbers, like college students, who will benefit greatly from these provisions.

Other aspects of the combined bill ensure our voter rolls are as up-to-date as possible, clean up and modernize the election code, and enshrine voting protections for our military and overseas voters and for first responders who vote absentee shortly before Election Day.

In short, SB 643 is a win for voting rights and a win for our state. It has always been my philosophy that every effort should be made by our leaders to increase participation in our democratic process and to ensure the integrity of our voting systems. This bill makes huge strides in both of those areas.

The senators who shepherded the bill through, and the advocates who provided support at all levels of the process, should be praised for their efforts. Though the legislative session was not as productive as some would have wanted, everyone can be proud that our future elections will benefit greatly from the work done in Santa Fe in 2015.

*-Maggie Toulouse Oliver
Bernalillo County Clerk*

LWVNM Program 2015-17

The 2015 Convention adopted a study of Charter School Regulations. This study will review how New Mexico's charter schools are regulated and what impact their authorization has on the sufficiency of funding for traditional public schools. Because charter schools are publicly funded, the study will examine the standards of accountability and transparency to see if they are as rigorous as those required of traditional public schools. The study will also examine the possible need for changes in charter school regulations regarding their governing bodies, their operations, and the rules for authorization and reauthorization.

For more information or to participate, contact Meredith Machen, Study Chair, at president@lwvnm.org

Completed Studies

- Reducing Alcohol-Related Deaths: Alcohol-related damage is not confined to the highway. The highest number of alcohol-related deaths in New Mexico is due to chronic liver disease. This study, led by Jan and Olin Bray, LWVCNM, resulted in a new Alcohol position.
- Land Use: The study committee created an extensive new policy on Natural Resources, which includes the Water position adopted in 2010. The study was done by Lee Lockie, Barbara Calef, and Judy Williams.
- Mental Health Care Services: The committee, led by Shelly Shepherd and Jan Bray of LWVCNM, examined mental health services provided by counties in New Mexico. The study resulted in a set of recommendations but no revisions in the existing position.



All of the revisions and updates of positions published in the Spring La Palabra were also adopted. Please see all of LWVNM positions through the link on the home page of the website, www.lwvnm.org. Many thanks to all members who contributed to these studies and updates.

-Judy Williams, Program Chair



New information is posted regularly on
www.lwvnm.org !
Check it out!

Looking at How the Legislature Operates

Over the years of observing and testifying at the Legislature, the League has developed opinions on how the Legislature could operate more effectively and efficiently. There are also a number of things they could do to make the operation and the webcasting, in the words of House Speaker Tripp, more “customer friendly.”

We want to make it clear that the League believes the Legislature has taken great strides over the years in making the process more open and available to the public. They have listened and responded to many of the suggestions of the League and other groups. But there is still more that can be done.

The LWVNM Action Committee and Board are developing recommendations based on how the Legislature currently operates. We already have some concrete suggestions that we can pass on to the Legislative leadership, but we want more input from other League members. The first steps will be within the Action Committee (open to any League member). Finally, we will seek input from other groups. The total process will last through 2016--aiming at improvements for the 2017 60-day legislative session, but we will submit our preliminary recommendations to the Legislative leadership before the 2016 session.

Three principles guide our project:

1. The ability of the public to participate in the legislative process should be a major consideration in the operation of the Legislature.
2. The business of enacting legislation that serves the public interest should take precedence over ceremonial functions, such as memorials.
3. The Legislature should strive for maximum transparency.



Please participate in the Action calls that are scheduled periodically to discuss this initiative and our advocacy agenda.

-Dick Mason, Action Chair

The First Black Women Voters of Ettrick

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Edna Meade Colson (third from left) was among the first African American women to vote in Ettrick, Virginia, after the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920. Colson and a group of other female voters posed for this picture in or about 1920. All were members of the faculty at Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute (now Virginia State University) in Petersburg, across the Appomattox River from Ettrick.

1
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6
5



**Signing of
Voting Rights Act, 1965**



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3



2
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1
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Illustration courtesy NY Times Magazine

A Dream Undone

Think about what you and the League can do to combat the 50-year campaign to roll back the Voting Rights Act.

Independent Redistricting Commission and the Santa Fe League

The City of Santa Fe Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (ICRC) has completed the redistricting of the City Council districts, thanks to the leadership of the League of Women Voters of Santa Fe! This was the first independent redistricting to take place anywhere in New Mexico, and it was brought about through a charter amendment drafted by LWVSFC member Karen Heldmeyer and approved by the voters last year.

This unusual mid-decade redistricting was caused by a recent annexation in Santa Fe, one that brought over 13,000 new residents to the city but left the four Council districts very unbalanced in terms of population. The redistricting will bring the districts into population balance and ensure equal representation for people in all areas of the city.

By ordinance, the Commission had seven members: one from each of the four districts, one from the newly-annexed area, a statistician, and a cartographer. Any registered voter could apply to be on the Commission and all participants were chosen by lot. Research & Polling of Albuquerque were the technical consultants to the Commission and attended every meeting.

Karen Heldmeyer, a former councilor, was chair of the Commission. All commission meetings were open to the public and entertained a great deal of public comment, and all draft maps and data were available to the public on the City's web site. Jody Larson gave a brief summary of the Commission's successful work at the LWVNM Convention on May 16 (see photo below). In the audience were the Chief Justice of the New Mexico Supreme Court and an Albuquerque City Council member who agreed that ICRC is a model for other local governments around the state.

-Judy Williams and Karen Heldmeyer



Jody Larson and Meredith Machen



Promoting Our Leagues

Whether championing non-partisan redistricting commissions, encouraging adoption of county bag bans, or advocating for better legislation, it is undeniable that League members continue to have a lasting, positive impact on the laws that influence our lives.

Although none of us do this work for awards or notoriety, the sustainability of our local Leagues and state organization relies heavily on our ability to increase membership. As Membership Director for the Los Alamos League, I was excited to take on the role of Communications Director for LWVNM because I understand the lasting impact a strong communication program can have on membership.

Whether authoring letters to the editor, utilizing social media like Facebook and Twitter, or engaging voters to help lobby on behalf of our legislative priorities, a robust communication strategy can raise awareness and increase membership.

Over the next few months, I will be traveling the state to meet with local leagues about ways the state board can help promote your work in a way that will help retain and grow membership at the local level.

Have a background in PR or just love social media? We want you on the Communications Committee! If you are interested in joining the team, please email tarin.nix@gmail.com or call [505-490-6874](tel:505-490-6874).

Poet George Herbert once wrote, "Good words are worth much and cost little," and I look forward to meeting with everyone to continue to make our words work.

-Tarin Nix

LWVNM BOARD CALENDAR 2015-16

Sept 19	LWVNM Board Meeting, Santa Fe, 11am– 2:30pm, Higher Education Center (HEC) #205, 1950 Siringo Road
Sept 24	Deadline for Fall <i>La Palabra</i>
Nov 14	LWVNM Board meeting, 10am –1:45pm, Socorro Public Library
Dec 7	Deadline for Winter <i>La Palabra</i>
Dec 12	LWVNM Lobbying Workshop, Albuquerque

Jan 16	LWVNM Board meeting, Albuquerque, 11am – 3pm
Feb 3 Wed	Legislative Reception, 5:30-7:30pm, Garrett's Desert Inn
Feb 4 Thurs	League Day at the Legislature
Mar 12	LWVNM Board meeting, HEC, Santa Fe
Mar 22	Deadline for Spring <i>La Palabra</i>
May 21	LWVNM Council, Los Alamos, TBA
July 16	LWVNM Board meeting, Domingo Baca Center, Albq, 11am – 2:30pm
July 26	Deadline for Summer <i>La Palabra</i>

*LWVNM Board meetings are bimonthly on Saturdays and are open to all members. To add agenda items, or submit *La Palabra* articles, please write to leaders@lwvnm.org or contact Meredith Machen at 505 577-6337.



The LWVNM Board, 2015-2017

Back Row: Miriam Ries, Dick Mason, Meredith Machen, Gwen Hanson, Akkana Peck
 Front Row: Laura Stokes, Carol Tucker Trelease, Diane Goldfarb, Barbara Calef, Judy Williams, Tarin Nix
 Missing: Lee Lockie

LWVNM Board 2015-2017

Officers

President	Meredith Machen
Vice-President	Dick Mason (Action)
Secretary	Carol Tucker Trelease
Treasurer	Cheryl Haaker

Directors

LWVCNM Team Leader	Carol Tucker Trelease
LWVGLC President	Gwen Hanson*
LWVLA President	Barbara Calef (Action)
LWVSFC President	Judy Williams (Program)
At Large	Diane Goldfarb
At Large	Lee Lockie
Communications	Tarin Nix*
Membership	Laura Stokes*
Webmaster	Akkana Peck*

Board Positions/Portfolios

Education, Voter Services	Meredith Machen
Health Care	Dick Mason and Judy Williams
Natural Resources	Judy Williams and Barbara Calef
Women's Rights	Diane Goldfarb

Off Board Positions

Archivist	Barbara Goedecke
Budget Committee	Adair Waldenberg, Chair, (LWVSFC); Erika Graf-Webster (LWVGLC); Cheryl Haaker (LWVCNM); LWVLA member TBA
<i>La Palabra</i> Editor	Miriam Ries
Membership/Leadership Dev.	Linda Moscarella
Nominating Committee	Peggy Howell*, Chair; Becky Shankland, Ardyth Norem*. Two more will be selected later from the Board.
Voter Guide Assistant	Lynn Jones

* New to Board as of May 17, 2015





**League of Women Voters of NM
2315 San Pedro NE, Suite F-6
Albuquerque, NM 87110**

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