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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.



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President's Corner

Judy Williams
LWVNM President
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Greetings, Fellow League Members!

Two major initiatives were approved at the July board meeting. We hope to engage all of you, enhance visibility for the League, and make a difference.

Voter Guides for the 2018 General Election

For the first time the New Mexico League and all the local Leagues will participate in publishing an online Voter Guide that will cover all elections in all parts of the state. The new initiative will allow us to ask questions of candidates, present biographical information about them, describe ballot initiatives and cover ballot issues. In addition, it will use evidence-based practices to engage voters and encourage them to go out and vote.

The 2018 election includes a ballot initiative that has been a League priority – an independent ethics commission. We hope this will create interest as voters go to the polls in November. If it is approved, the League will work with Common Cause New Mexico to develop legislation putting flesh on the bones of the constitutional amendment.

2020 Census Looming Crisis: Defending Democracy

The board has approved an advocacy project for the next decennial Census: To ensure that every person in the state of New Mexico is officially counted during the 2020 Census. The importance of ensuring an accurate count in New Mexico cannot be overstated. \$6.1

billion comes in to New Mexico every year based on Census counts. That funding supports Medicaid, SNAP, highway planning and construction, Medicare Part B (physicians fee schedule), Title I education grants, school lunch, Head Start, housing vouchers, WIC, and more.

The Project: To ensure that every person in the state of New Mexico is officially counted during the 2020 Census.

A census of the entire population is required every ten years by the U.S. Constitution. It is used to apportion Congressional districts and to distribute federal funds to states. The importance of ensuring an accurate count in New Mexico cannot be overstated.

What's at stake in New Mexico:

\$6.1 billion comes in to New Mexico every year based on the current Census counts and data. That funding supports Medicaid, SNAP, highway planning and construction, Medicare Part B (physicians fee schedule), Title I education grants, school lunch, Head Start, housing vouchers, WIC, and more.

The above-mentioned \$6.1 billion is allocated based on formulas. The majority of the funds are allocated based on the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage. Because allocations are inversely related to Per Capita Income, an undercount of low-income residents has an even more significant impact on future funding.

- New Mexico loses \$23 million per year for every 1% undercount.
- The FY 2015 fiscal loss to New Mexico as a result of the 2010 Census undercount was over \$2.6 billion.
- That means a loss of \$1,121 for every person missed in the Census.

The Challenge: New Mexico is the most difficult state to count.

- New Mexico has a disproportionately large percentage of difficult-to-reach groups, (43% of the population), including

those living in rural communities, Native Americans on tribal land, young children, and the impoverished.

- New Mexico has a disproportionately high percentage of people without Internet access. The government plans to have most people complete the 2020 Census online. Many New Mexicans in the difficult-to-reach groups either live where there is no broadband access or lack computers and/or email addresses.
- New Mexico has a disproportionate percentage of immigrants. The Citizenship question may scare away a lot of people who fear providing that information will put them in jeopardy of being arrested or deported.
- New Mexicans, like many other Americans, have become increasingly suspicious of these kinds of forms asking for personal information. Unless they are convinced that an accurate Census will benefit them personally, they might decide not to participate.

The Strategies:

- Create a coalition: Identify and work with other organizations, tribal entities and corporations to create a state-wide coalition to protect the census.
- Develop a PR/Marketing Strategy, somewhat like Santa Fe's promotion of Ranked-choice voting,
- to explain the census, answer people's questions and encourage them to participate.
- Engage the Media: Work with TV stations, radio broadcasters, newspapers and others to undertake a massive, coordinated effort to educate the population about the Census and why it is important to participate. Spanish language radio and TV (Univision and Telemundo) would be included.
- Remove the barriers from "hard to reach" populations and inaccessible locations with innovative strategies. For instance:
 - Persuade TV stations to send their satellite trucks to the Navajo reservation and other remote areas for a "Census Counting Event".
 - Send a "Census Team", with laptops, to community centers, chapter houses etc. to help people complete the online Census form.
 - Engage "influencers" like community leaders and celebrities to encourage their constituents/fans to complete the Census.
- Recruit and educate students to help their parents get counted.
- Supplement/enhance the paltry number of federally funded Census takers to go out to communities with language issues, etc.

How to Help

The plan was developed by the LWVNM Ad Hoc Committee to Protect the Census (Judy Williams, Barbara Calef, Akkana Peck, Laura Atkins, Hannah Burling and Marcy Litzenberg). We will need many volunteers and ideas for this effort. Contact Judy Williams at jkwilliams24@gmail.com

Other LWVNM Activities We are looking to expand our advocacy (lobby) corps for the next Legislative session, which promises to be very busy with a new administration and lots of bills. Please contact Dick Mason (polirich@aol.com) if you're interested, and plan to attend the Advocacy Workshop in Santa Fe on December 8.

Our membership in the Coalition for Choice will also provide opportunities to advocate for legislation to protect abortion rights at the state level against the possibility of adverse judicial decisions from the Supreme Court. Diane Goldfarb is leading this effort for the League; if you are interested in covering choice bills in the 2019 legislative session, contact Diane at dgoldfarb1@comcast.net.

Report from the LWVUS National Convention, Chicago

By Judy Williams, President, LWVNM



The New Mexico Delegation: (l to r) Janet Blair, Barbara Calef, Jan Strand, Laura Atkins, President Judy Williams, Marcy Litzenberg, Hannah Burling, Peggy Howell and Andrea Targhetta. Not pictured: Akkana Peck, Gwen Hanson, Dale Yeo and Miriam Reis.

New Mexico sent 13 delegates representing all the Leagues to the 2018 LWVUS Biennial Convention. It was a mix of stimulating and frustrating events and actions. There were two major seminars during the weekend – reflecting two LWVUS priority areas. One was on redistricting, presented by two people who were involved in *Gil v. Whitford*, which was decided in the Supreme Court just before convention. The other was a largely interactive session on using a diversity, equity and inclusion lens to strengthen social impact and collaboration. There was discussion of unconscious bias – mental association without awareness, listening without hearing, interrupting, and other habits that might interfere with our efforts to diversify.



There was some focus on the Transformation Journey undertaken by LWVUS. Under a grant, they conducted a self-examination about what is working and what is not. They identified the need to diversify membership, expand and diversify the funding base, and focus on key concerns – thus the slogan, Making Democracy Work®. Declining membership and the interests of younger generations require re-thinking, more focused work, and some reorganization. It is apparently a work in progress, but they are trying to figure out how people can “join at any level” of the League and participate in many ways. If this all sounds a bit vague, it is. Some of their plans will require far more thought, outreach, and persuasion than has been done to date.

Their main message is that we must develop a network of Leagues that “are powerfully communicating our story consistently at all levels; engaging and welcoming new members, supporters and volunteers; embracing diversity, equity and inclusion; and has the resources neces-



Plenary session

sary to support our core work and have a meaningful impact for the next century and beyond.” They will be looking for buy-in from all Leagues, and may even grant funding to those who cooperate.

Finally, in addition to recruiting new members, we should be attracting “engagers” – those who donate or come to events, or help in other ways. LWVUS sees this as the way of the future, as millennials aren’t as interested in joining organizations as we were!

Convention 2018: Summary of official business

Important dates:

- 2020 Convention: June 25-28, 2020, Hyatt Regency and Liaison Hotel, Washington DC.
- August 26, 2020 – 100th anniversary of Women’s Suffrage

Meeting events:

There is a new board – that is, there are new members, but several previous members remain, including the President, Chris Carson.

The new CEO, Virginia Kase, was introduced. Virginia is currently the Chief Operating Officer of CASA, an organization at the forefront of the immigrant rights movement representing nearly 100,000 members. In her position as COO she has driven the strategic growth, direction, and operations of the organization fighting for Latino and immigrant rights. Kase started her career in nonprofit at the age of 23 when she co-founded the Hartford Youth Peace Initiative in an effort to help reduce gang violence in her hometown of Hartford, CT.

The Budget was approved; there will be no change in PMP, which remains at \$32.

Bylaws changes

Article VI, Withdrawal of Recognition, was amended to change the reason for withdrawing recognition from recurrent failure to fulfill recognition requirements (underlined items are new). The new reasons are recurrent failure to follow League principles or policies. In addition, the committee may establish conditions for continuation or the board may withdraw recognition. Recognition requirements have been relaxed in an effort to encourage the creation of new Leagues.



NM Delegation at the Saturday night dinner. The featured speaker was journalist Ellen Weiss who spoke about her new book, The Women's Hour.

Program:

- Adopt the Proposed LWVUS Program For 2018-20: Campaign for Making Democracy Work® As Amended. The Campaign for Making Democracy Work® includes ensuring a free, fair and accessible electoral system for all eligible voters by focusing on Voting Rights, Improving Elections and advocacy for the National Popular Vote Compact, Campaign Finance/Money in Politics and Redistricting.
- Retain all current LWVUS positions in the areas of Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resources and Social Policy.

Substantive motions approved by Convention:

- Add "Advocacy for the National Popular Vote Compact" as an amendment to the 2018-2020 LWVUS Program, Making Democracy Work ® / Improving Elections.
- LWVUS supports an emphasis on the ERA this year and every year until the ERA is ratified and becomes a U.S. Constitutional Amendment. Be it resolved that the LWVUS supports efforts to remove the time limits for ratification of the ERA.
- When the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) is duly ratified by the 38th state, the League of Women Voters of the United States takes the required steps to see the Amendment through whatever judicial or other challenges may occur until we see the ERA added to the U. S. Constitution in clear, bold, black and white.



LWVUS President Chris Carson presiding at Convention.

- The League of Women Voters reaffirms our commitment to the constitutional right of privacy as an individual to make reproductive choices.
- The 2018 Convention of the League of Women Voters of the United States urgently reaffirms its long-held position that the Electoral College should be abolished.
- The League of Women Voters stands united with, and in support of, efforts to price carbon emissions, whether cap-and-trade, carbon tax/fee, or another viable pricing mechanism. The League does not have a position on how the revenue generated is to be used. We do not espouse any single method of pricing carbon over another. We will evaluate all proposed methods based on their effectiveness to abate emissions and whether the method can be successfully implemented.
- The League of Women Voters supports a set of climate assessment criteria that ensures that energy policies align with current climate science. These criteria require that the latest climate science be used to evaluate proposed energy policies and major projects in light of the globally-agreed-upon goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees C, informed by the successful spirit of global cooperation as affirmed in the UN COP 21 Paris agreement.
- The League of Women Voters of the U.S. make gun control, gun safety, and gun ownership limitations a priority in its lobbying effort.

Action Committee Report

By Dick Mason, Action Committee Chair

The Action Committee has decided to develop a more strategic focus for the coming legislative session. This means concentrating on a limited number of issues where we can make a difference. The priorities approved by the LWVNM Board at the July 21st meeting are:

- Tax reform and funding – tax reform is going to be a major focus of the 2019 session. We believe it is key to creating the funding structure that would enable action on many of our other interests, including education and health care.
- Automatic voter registration/same day voter registration/extend voter registration period.
- Ask the legislature to consider the Iowa redistricting model, which retains some legislative authority.
- Ethics Commission enabling legislation.
- Legislation to enshrine a woman's right to choose. Currently, if Roe v Wade is overturned, current state law criminalizing abortion will be the rule.

The Action Committee plans to educate our members on these issues during the fall and early winter so they can speak to their legislators before the session. We will plan this through local League leaders, and are **asking for volunteers**.



League members may speak on behalf of legislation as authorized by LWVNM.

Our legislation tracking format will prioritize legislation based upon an A-B-C rating. For A legislation the League will lobby in advance of the session and assure we are there for committee hearings. For B legislation we will speak at committee hearings when a volunteer lobbyist is available. For C legislation we will just let others know we will be supporting this legislation. The legislation tracking sheet will track A and B

legislation, but C legislation will not be tracked.

Legislative leadership has told us this is going to be a very busy session and that legislation that is filed early (before the session begins) has the best chance of passing. Senate Rules, where many bills start in the Senate, will be very busy with confirmations of new cabinet members, etc.

The Legislative Calendar for LWVNM

October –December, 2018 – education on League priorities

December 8, 2018 – Advocacy Workshop – State Capitol – 10 am to noon

December 17, 2018– January 11, 2019 – Early filing of legislation

January 15, 2019 – session starts at noon – New Governor delivers message

February 6, 2019 – LWVNM Evening reception – location to be announced

February 7, 2019 – League Day at the Legislature – events at the NM Land Office

February 14, 2019 – deadline for filing legislation

March 16, 2019 – session ends at noon

April 5, 2019 - legislation not acted upon by the Governor is pocket vetoed

Legislative Process

Members of the Action Committee met with Speaker Egolf and Senate Majority Leader Wirth to discuss certain procedures in the legislature. Here is their feedback:

“Dummy bills” – These are bills filed after the filing deadline. They are supposed to be for emergencies, but have been used for other purposes. In the past they have been filed without titles and in some cases heard in committee before the content is available on the website. There has been some improvement. Speaker Egolf has systematized the process and will provide us with a write-up explaining the system. Senator Wirth asked that we send him the memo and the Senate will follow the same process.

Another transparency issue - Some Senate Committees are not posting their agendas online. Senator Wirth said he would talk to the relevant Committee chairs about this issue.



Save the Date!

Legislative Advocacy
Workshop,
Saturday, December 8,
10 to 12, Room 322,
New Mexico Capitol,
Santa Fe.

Transfer of Public Lands Report: The Economic Impact of Transferring Federal Public Lands to the States

By Chris Furlanetto, TFPL Committee

The Transfer of Federal Public Lands study committee has reviewed papers that discuss either the economic impact of transferring federal public lands to states and/or the economic impact of federal land ownership on local/state economies. The sources cited represent a range of viewpoints on the transfer issue.

This article summarizes the conclusions of selected papers. Note that although there is some redundancy among the papers, each one adds unique points to the discussion. (Links to all papers cited are below.)

I. Keiter and Ruple, S.J. Quinney College of Law (University of Utah) Legal Studies Research Papers #99 (January) and #143 (December), 2015

The first paper begins with a discussion of two crucial differences that impact costs and revenues related to public lands:

- Federal lands (BLM, U.S. Forest Service) are managed under a multiple-use, sustained-yield mandate; state lands are typically managed under a revenue-maximization mandate. One result is that non-revenue producing resources are protected under the federal mandate but not under state mandates.

- States have balanced budget constraints; federal agencies do not.

Keiter and Ruple identify several areas where transfer of federal lands to states is likely to have an economic impact:

- State grazing fees are higher compared to federal fees, increasing costs to ranchers.
- States might increase recreation fees to maximize revenues, increasing costs to tourists and potentially decreasing overall tourism revenue.
- State royalty rates on oil and gas production are higher compared to federal rates, increasing costs to producers and ultimately to consumers.
- States might attempt to convert federal hard-rock mineral claims to leases to generate more revenue.

Looking at two specific states with different primary revenue sources - Utah (oil and gas) and Idaho (timber production) - the authors conclude it is unlikely either state could cover the costs of managing the transferred lands with the projected revenues. Only extremely optimistic estimates of commodity prices, royalty rates and production levels result in sufficient revenue. These conclusions are based on economic studies commissioned by the respective state legislatures.

The primary conclusion of Keiter and Ruple's second paper is that even if the federal government were to agree to transfer public lands to states, it is highly unlikely that subsurface mineral rights would be transferred along with the surface land. Language in the state Enabling Acts as well as subsequent court decisions favors federal retention of the mineral resources. Without ownership of the subsurface rights, mineral-rich states could not generate significant new revenue.



II. Collins, Montana Law Review, To Transfer or Not to Transfer, That Is the Question: An Analysis of Public Lands Title in the West Summer 2015

Collins also reviews the Utah state-commissioned economic analysis and concludes that Utah is unlikely to be able to cover the costs of managing the transferred lands unless the highly favorable assumptions in the Utah study (regarding oil and gas prices, royalty rates and levels of production) continue to hold – but they have not.

The author also discusses the situation in Montana, a state with a much smaller percentage of federal land compared to Utah; its federal lands are mostly under the USFS rather than the BLM. The Montana legislature commissioned a study of the transfer issue, but not an economic analysis. The current Montana Governor, Steve Bullock (D), is opposed to transfer, saying that the state could not afford to manage the lands.

Collins brings up three issues that may be overlooked by proponents of land transfers:

- States would lose the share of natural resources revenue they currently receive from the federal government as well as Payments in Lieu of Taxes, Secure Rural Schools funds and other programmatic compensation.
- The federal government is highly unlikely to give up subsurface mineral rights that generate significant amounts of revenue from the public lands.

- Fire suppression costs, which can be overwhelming and are highly unpredictable, would also transfer to states where budgets must be balanced annually.

III. Stambro et. al. (Univ. of Utah), Jakus (Utah State Univ.), and Grijalva (Weber State Univ.), An Analysis of the Transfer of Public Lands to the State of Utah, 2014

Please also see the more extensive article in the Winter 2017 La Palabra on this study commissioned by the Utah Legislature.

The authors conclude that Utah could cover the costs of managing transferred lands, albeit with some level of financial strain in the early years; however, their conclusion is based on highly favorable revenue assumptions. As Keiter and Ruple as well as Collins conclude, these assumptions are very unlikely to hold.



The authors identify key factors that need to be considered in determining whether a federal to state transfer of public lands will be economically beneficial to a state. These factors – and possible implications - are summarized below.

- Federal lands are managed under a multiple-use, sustained-yield mandate whereas state lands, especially state trust lands, are often managed under a profit- or revenue-maximization mandate. This is why transfer advocates often argue that states are more efficient land managers. However, changing to a revenue-maximization mandate (*e.g.*, to raise more funds for public education) may have implications for public access and thereby have negative effects on current revenue sources.
- States do not necessarily have agencies corresponding to the federal agencies, meaning that there would be start-up costs to develop the expertise and management plans for some categories of transferred lands.
- Currently the federal government is responsible for the highly unpredictable costs of wildfires on federal lands; land transfers would not only shift these costs onto the state (which must balance its budget) but would also take federal fire-fighting resources away from the state.
- Federal agencies are required to provide access to and manage programs related to federal lands even without sufficient budget dollars, resulting in deficits. States would have to assume these liabilities.
- Clean up and remediation costs would also likely become state liabilities.
- States would immediately lose annual federal payroll dollars, generating a negative ripple effect on the state's economy.
- Changes to the management mandate for public lands could have a negative impact on the 'net consumer benefit,' a concept that measures the dollar value to a consumer over and above the 'real dollar' cost of a recreational experience. This would, in turn, have a negative impact on the actual dollars consumers are willing to spend on recreation in a state.

IV. Fretwell and Regan, Property and Environment Research Center (PERC), Divided Lands: State vs. Federal Management in the West, 2015

This paper discusses costs vs. revenues involved in managing federal lands vs. state trust lands in four states: Idaho, Montana, Arizona and New Mexico. These states differ in the percentage of federal lands and also in the characteristics of those lands.

The authors compare costs and revenues from the BLM, USFS and state trust lands in the states and observe that, in general, states generate more revenue per dollar spent than the federal agencies. They acknowledge the differences in management mandates and user fees between federal and state lands as well as the differences in natural resources in each state. They point out that the portion of federal land revenues shared with states is significantly less than what states could generate on their own. Significantly, they omit the costs of fire management from their estimates.

Even though states appear to perform better, *i.e.*, they now generate higher profit margins, the authors conclude that direct transfer of federal lands under current rules would likely not impact costs or revenues. Rather, states would need to transition to management of the transferred lands under state policies – changes that would incur costs and would also likely have negative consequences for conservation, wildlife and public access.

Also, the authors note that federal land managers have no incentives to generate revenues in



excess of costs because revenues go into general Treasury accounts, not back to the land management agency. In fact, federal managers are not required to cover – or exceed – costs with revenues. State land managers are mandated to maximize revenues.

The paper blames at least a portion of the higher federal costs on excessive regulations; the authors argue for a

more market-based management approach. This is an area where streamlining of regulations may be effective.

V. Headwaters Economics, Federal Lands in the West: Liability or Asset?, March 2017 and National Monuments: Economic Performance Before and After Designation, August 2017

The first paper looks at economic performance in 276 non-metro counties in the 11 contiguous Western states based on share of federal land in each county. Comparisons of growth from 1970 to 2015 in population, employment, and personal income show significantly more growth on all measures for the counties with the highest percentage of federal land relative to those with the lowest percentage. Per capita income growth, however, was only slightly higher in the counties with the highest percentage of federal land.

The same results are observed for population, employment and personal income growth when comparing counties based on percentages of *protected* federal lands. However, the gap in per capita income growth is much larger with this metric (19% vs. only 4% when the comparison is based simply on share of federal land). Protected lands include National Parks, Wilderness Areas, Conservation Areas, Monuments and Wildlife Refuges.

The authors note that communities with more federal land tend to be less suitable for agriculture; they may offer more opportunities for recreation, tourism, and in-migration because of their scenic environments. These communities tend to have more diverse economies than those more focused on agriculture. However, the characteristics of the federal lands differ so widely across the West that it is difficult to outline a general roadmap for economic success.

The second paper analyzes population, employment, personal and per capita income in areas before and after designation of National Monuments. The Malpais is the only NM monument studied; significant improvement on all measures has occurred there. Looking at all monuments included in the study, there is no evidence that designation of lands as monuments has had a negative impact on the economy of the area. Rather, these areas have become more diversified, have enjoyed an improved quality of life and have created recreational opportunities

Links:

I.

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2555922

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2701292

II.

<https://scholarship.law.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2394&context=mlr>

III.

<http://publiclands.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/1.%20Land%20Transfer%20Analysis%20Final%20Report.pdf>

IV.

https://www.perc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/150303_PERC_DividedLands.pdf

V.

<https://headwaterseconomics.org/public-lands/federal-lands-performance/>

<https://headwaterseconomics.org/dataviz/national-monuments/>



Natural Resources Report: New law is a mixed blessing

By Barbara Calef, Natural Resources Committee

As we reported in the Spring La Palabra, the Omnibus Spending Bill passed by Congress in March will provide additional funds to the U.S. Forest Service so that it will no longer need to fight fires using funds intended for other purposes. Starting in 2020, the Forest Service will be able to access over \$2 billion per year outside of its regular fire suppression budget to fight for-

est fires. Unfortunately, the law also allows logging projects of less than 3,000 acres to be approved without consideration of the impact of multiple projects in an area if the purpose of the logging project is to reduce fire risk.



A second provision allows the Forest Service to postpone reviewing the effect of forest management plans on newly listed threatened or endangered species until the management plan is due to be revised, which might not be for 15 years.

Our Children’s Trust

On July 20 the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled unanimously that the lawsuit known as “Our Children’s Trust” can go forward. The Trump administration is arguing that the case violates the separation of powers. The lawsuit was originally filed in 2015 by 21 children and an environmental group in a federal court in Oregon, and it targeted numerous federal agencies. The plaintiffs argue the federal government’s knowledge of the consequences of climate change gives them a constitutional duty to take strong actions to protect children. The trial is scheduled to continue with a court date set for October 29. LWVNM has signed a resolution in support of the suit.



Volkswagen Fiduciary Funding

As part of the settlement by Volkswagen for falsifying NOx (nitrogen oxide) emission data from certain vehicle models, New Mexico will receive funding for projects that will reduce NOx. There will be separate funds available for electric school buses.

From the NMED website: The New Mexico Department of the Environment (NMED) will accept applications for projects related to the Volkswagen Resolution Agreement between July 2 and September 14, 2018.



Eligible projects must demonstrate a reduction in NOx and meet the criteria described in the Resolution Agreement. The Resolution Agreement allows NMED to approve funds of up to one third of the initial allocation of the State in the first year. There will be at least two additional opportunities to send applications for financing future projects. These opportunities will be available in 2019 and 2020, and possibly later.”

Drilling near Chaco

We reported in the Winter La Palabra that the BLM had deferred leases within a ten-mile buffer area of the Chaco Culture National Historic Park. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke had announced that he would defer the leases until his administration could “do some cultural consultation.” Native and environmental organizations were asking for a moratorium on drilling in the Greater Chaco Area, which extends 20 miles beyond the boundaries of the park, until a new

resource management plan amendment has been completed.



Now, with no further consultation, the BLM has proposed a lease sale for December 9, 2018 that might include four parcels within the 10-mile buffer. (There is a note on the BLM map of those parcels saying, “Possible Deferral Reason: Within 10 miles of Chaco Culture National Historical Park.) The plan for the sale also includes a number of parcels outside of the buffer area but within the Greater Chaco Area.

Until this year there was a mandatory scoping period for proposals when the public could give input. Now, as part of the streamlining called for by Secretary Zinke, the call for public comment is regarded as optional and varies in length. For the current proposal the agency originally allowed 11 days. It was extended one week, to end on July 27. We are disappointed in the lack of transparency: the first public announcement we saw came out on July 26 .

Spent Nuclear Fuel Reprocessing

By Kathy Taylor, Nuclear Waste Study Committee

Perspective

Spent nuclear fuel from commercial nuclear power plants is currently designated by US law to be stored in Yucca Mountain in Nevada. Holtec International and the Eddy Lea County Energy Alliance have teamed to submit a license application for a consolidated interim storage facility in southeastern New Mexico. Spent nuclear fuel would be stored there until Yucca Mountain is ready.

Long-term storage is not the only option. The material could be reprocessed and reused as fuel. The U.S. does not reprocess, but other countries do reprocess their spent nuclear fuel successfully. This article examines reprocessing as a possible alternative to long-term storage.

What is Reprocessing?

Reprocessing is the chemical method used to separate uranium (U) and plutonium (Pu) from the fuel matrix. Many processes have been developed depending on the type of fuel and the ultimate goal, such as:

- Recovery of U-235 and Pu-239
- Recovery of materials for medical procedures or precursors to Pu-238 for space power applications
- Radioactivity minimization

PUREX (Plutonium Uranium Redox Extraction) is the standard reprocessing method for the recovery of uranium and plutonium from used light water reactor fuel.

Reprocessing has been practiced since the early 1940s, initially for military applications. More than a dozen countries, including the-USSR, United Kingdom, and the U.S., have run at least pilot plants for reprocessing. Only a handful have developed full scale facilities, including the US, UK, France, India, Israel, Pakistan, and Russia.

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US History

The West Valley Reprocessing Plant, a pilot plant for commercial fuel, was operated from 1966 as a private-public partnership, shutting down in 1972 to come into compliance with new regulations. Too expensive to upgrade, the plant was ceded to NY State in 1976, leaving 600,000 gallons of high-level waste in storage tanks. Congress authorized the West Valley Demonstration Project in 1980 that vitrified the high-level waste and sealed the glass blocks into stainless steel containers that are stored on site, awaiting final disposition. This is a highly stable waste form for long term storage.

The Midwest Fuel Recovery Plant at Morris, Illinois, attempted to use innovative technology to minimize liquid waste. The plant began testing in 1971, but technical problems prevented it from becoming operational.

The Barnwell Nuclear Fuel Plant was the first large scale commercial reprocessing plant in the U.S. Significant construction had been completed in 1977 when the NRC terminated the license due to proliferation concerns following the Indian production of atomic weapons using reprocessed reactor fuel. President Ford announced a moratorium and President Carter extended that to an indefinite deferral of commercial fuel reprocessing. Many other countries followed the U.S. lead and abandoned their reprocessing plans. President Reagan lifted the ban in 1981, but by then the low cost of uranium discouraged further efforts. U.S. commercial reactor operators buy uranium elsewhere, including Canada, Russia, Australia, Kazakhstan, Namibia, Uzbekistan, and Niger.

Other countries have had more consistent public policies

France - The La Hague site, in operation since 1976, has nearly half of the world's light water reactor spent nuclear fuel reprocessing capacity. It extracts plutonium, which is then recycled into MOX [mixed (Pu + U) oxide] fuel for use in French reactors and for sale to Japan and other countries. The remaining high-level radioactive waste is vitrified and stored for future disposal. Prior to 2015 more than 32,000 metric tons of spent nuclear fuel had been reprocessed, with 70% from France, 17% from Germany and 9% from Japan.

United Kingdom - Sellafield is a nuclear fuel reprocessing and waste vitrification plant constructed in 1942 on the coast of the Irish Sea in Cumbria, England.

Russia - The Mayak plant was built between 1945 and 1948 in great haste and in total secrecy

as part of the Soviet Union's atomic bomb project. Five nuclear reactors were built to make plutonium for weapons. Later the plant specialized in reprocessing spent fuel from nuclear reactors and plutonium from decommissioned weapons.

In 1957 Mayak was the site of the explosion of a poorly maintained storage tank, releasing 50-100 tons of high-level radioactive waste. The resulting radioactive cloud contaminated more than 290 square miles in the eastern Urals causing sickness and death from radiation poisoning. The Soviet regime kept this accident secret for thirty years. The event was eventually rated as third in severity only to the nuclear reactor accidents at Chernobyl in Ukraine and Fukushima, Japan.



India - The Kalpakkam Atomic Reprocessing Plant, starting up in 1996, is one of three such facilities in India.

Economics and Social Values

The relative economics of reprocessing versus waste disposal has been much debated for years. Studies have modeled the total fuel cycle costs based on one-time recycling of plutonium in existing thermal reactors compared to the total costs of an open fuel cycle with direct disposal. The range of results is very wide, but all studies agreed that under 2005 economic conditions the reprocessing-recycle option is the more costly.

“In the case of recycling used fuel, you can eliminate the need for 25-30% of new fuel [and consequent mining]. In addition, by reprocessing, we convert the waste form into highly stable vitrified glass that we believe is a better durable waste form than the fuel assembly itself.”

According to Dr. Alan Hanson of AREVA (a French multinational group specializing in nuclear power and renewable energy), the economics of recycling can vary. “It is clearly economical to recycle aluminum because of the huge energy costs to make aluminum but

it may be marginally economical to recycle paper. Nevertheless, it is the right thing to do. In the case of recycling used fuel, you can eliminate the need for 25-30% of new fuel [and consequent mining]. In addition, by reprocessing, we convert the waste form into highly stable vitrified glass that we believe is a better durable waste form than the fuel assembly itself.”

LWVNM Council 2018

By Judy Williams, President, LWVNM and Akkana Peck, Secretary, LWVNM

The 2018 LWVNM Council meeting was held on May 19, 2018 at the MCM Elegante, Albuquerque.

Lunch featured speaker James Jimenez, Executive Director of New Mexico Voices for Children, who shared stories he's heard from people around the state of poverty-related challenges they've encountered. He also provided delegates with several handouts full of statistics about NM's children and families. He discussed needed policy changes and legislative priorities, and he thanked the League for working on most of these over the years. Some useful information can be found in these links: <https://www.nmvoices.org/archives/9819>
<https://www.nmvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Blueprint-2-pager-2018.pdf>

Program:

Judy Williams described the upcoming U.S. Decennial Census challenges (see Census article in this newsletter)

There have been almost no changes in our positions except our new position in support of ranked choice voting (RCV), approved at our March meeting. Santa Fe's most recent election used RCV, and it worked out pretty well; Las Cruces is considering it, and now LWVNM has a position they can use to advocate for it.

Membership report:

LWVNM has 491 members. This is an increase, but we discussed the need to recruit more members and supporters, and increase the League's diversity.

Action: Dick Mason reported on the recently passed Local Election Act, which would consolidate certain local elections. The legislature had not published a formal analysis of what was finally included in this long bill, but distributed a brief summary by Rep. Paul Bandy.

Natural resources:

Barbara Calef discussed the federal government's efforts to streamline the oil and gas leasing procedures, including areas around Chaco National Historic Park. The Chaco area continues to be a contentious issue, with environmental and some tribal groups concerned about the impact of fossil fuel development in the surrounding areas.

Education

Meredith Machen described the Legislative Education Study Committee meetings as a model of bipartisan collaboration. There was also discussion about the funding equity lawsuit, which was to be decided soon (It was decided on July 20).

Directions to the board:

Only five attendees submitted Directions to the Board.

The group also heard updates on positions and local League events. Comments on what the League did well included League Day, legislative advocacy and the legislative advocacy workshop.

Suggestions for the coming year included voter turnout efforts, recruiting members to work on advocacy activities, increase membership, speakers on important topics.

May 21 LWVNM Board Meeting and Program Decisions

The board approved the following positions:

Net Neutrality, High-Speed Internet, Public Access Media position, through concurrence with the LWV CT.

Election Procedures position changes: Drop the reference to "in the US House of Representatives" in our election position.

Revise the position on Ranked choice voting (RCV) for all statewide elections to exclude "statewide" so it can apply to local elections too.

Position supporting automatic voter registration and same-day registration. The League already supports this, but the addition will make it doubly clear.

Add to our positions "Systems that improve the election experience and provide ease of ballot access, including vote by mail supplemented by secure ballot dropbox and accessible voting centers." Concurrence with LWVOR (and also WA, CA but OR has the best language).

Local League News

Central New Mexico Report

By Andrea Targhetta, 2nd Vice President

The LWVCNM is moving our monthly lunch meetings to the Embassy Suites Hotel in Albuquerque. We welcome visiting members from other Leagues, but we do require reservations be made. Reservations are due by 10 a.m. on the Monday before the Thursday lunch. They can be made by calling the League office and leaving a message at (505)884-8441 or by emailing lunch@lwvcnm.org

Here is the schedule for the LWVCNM for the coming year
LWVCNM meets monthly on the 2nd Thursday

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Embassy Suites Hotel
1000 Woodward Place NE
Albuquerque, NM 87102

NE Heights Unit Meeting

2nd Thursday of Sept, Oct, Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr
10 a.m.

La Vida Llena - Card Room
10501 Lagrima De Oro Rd NE

Albuquerque, NM 87111

2018-2019 | Schedule of Events

July

Lunch Meeting: APD Forward

August

Lunch Meeting: Immigration

**Followed by FREE "Social Media 101" Workshop for Members: Trish Lopez (1pm)*

September

NE Heights Unit: Election Security

Lunch Meeting: Election Finance

October

NE Heights Unit: Fossil Fuels/ Renewable Energies

Lunch Meeting: Environment

November

Lunch Meeting: Local Election Results

December

Lunch Meeting: National Election Results

2019: January

Greater Las Cruces Report

By Kim Sorensen, President LWVGLC

LWVGLC welcomed Alex Luna and Daniela Gonzalez to June's Dinner with a Speaker. Alex is a community organizer at NM Comunidades en Accion de Fe, (CAFÉ), and Daniela is a DACA recipient. Alex fielded many questions about the immigration crises and what is going on in DAC. Daniella shared her fears, hopes, and dreams.

The 50th Anniversary Committee, established to help us celebrate LWVGLC's formation 50 years ago, sponsored a forum on Mental Health Issues July 18th. The panel consisted of Ron Gurley, an activist in the mental health care field, moderator; New Mexico State Senator Mary Kay Papen, Kimi Jordan, vice-president of National Association for the Mentally Ill-New Mexico, and Jamie Michaels, Health and Human Services director for Dona Ana County.

August 21st is the Las Cruces special election. There are two items to be voted on; a proposed city charter amendment that would reform the process for recalling elected officials and a proposal to issue a general obligation bond to be used to improve Las Cruces's infrastructure. LWVGLC is supporting both.

We have candidates' forums tentatively planned for late August and September with KRWGTV

NE Heights Unit: Legislative Preview

Lunch Meeting: Legislative Preview

2019: January

NE Heights Unit: Legislative Preview

Lunch Meeting: Legislative Preview

2019: February

NE Heights Meeting: International Trade

Lunch Meeting: Behavioral Health in Bernalillo County

2019: March

NE Heights Meeting: Sunshine Month, Open Government

Lunch Meeting: Sunshine Month, Open Government

2019: May

Annual Meeting: Legislative Wrap Up

2019: June

Lunch Meeting: NM Homegrown Companies

including forums for Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, and Attorney General. In addition, we are hoping to schedule candidate forums for the local elections for State Representatives, Public Land Commissioners, and DAC Sheriff.

Besides the candidates' forums, there will be a forum on Education on September 20th. The 50th Anniversary Committee is sponsoring this forum.

October 9th is the first day that early voting starts and the last day to register to vote. To celebrate the LWVGLC and the Election Advisory Council are planning an event for that day titled "Celebrating Democracy in Dona Ana County. Co-chairs are Erika Graf-Webster and Barb Records. The purpose is to get citizens excited about voting.

Other league activities coming up: Scott Krahling, County Clerk, will be speaking at the **Dinner with a Speaker on August 13th**. He will explain how ranked choice voting works and the impact of consolidation of elections. Both were approved by the Las Cruces City Council. The 50th Anniversary Committee is sponsoring **Movie Night!!! August 24th 7pm**. "The Silence of Cricket Koogler." Followed by Discussion. The **Program Fiesta is September 7th**.

Santa Fe County Report

By Laura Atkins, Representative

Annual meeting: The annual meeting was held May 9, 2018. The leadership team is essentially the same as last year except we've added a membership chair, Debbie Helper, and Donna Reynolds is now on the board as communications chair. The leadership team concept was approved for another year, after which a decision will be made to continue or go back to the previous structure. If we continue with the current structure, the bylaws will be amended to conform. Most members expressed support for the leadership team concept.

Membership: We have 148 members with 18 joining since Jan 1, 2018. We will hold a new member coffee on August 24 to welcome members who joined since December 2017.

Programs: The information meeting for the nuclear waste storage study was held on July 18. Attendance was low. There were four League members and two from the public plus Karen Douglas, nuclear waste study chair, who made the presentation. The discussion was good.

Upcoming programs:

- August 24 league members will attend the Santa Fe Fiesta Melodrama and Happy Hour
- September 12 general meeting topic - benefits of early childhood education (speaker TBD)

Action and Advocacy:

- Pilot Flying J Proposal: Several of the component parts of the conceptual plan were approved by the BCC, but not the truck stop.
- Three LWVSFC members are working with the city to improve the city's website.

Voter services: Ann Coulston, voter services chair is leaving Santa Fe and will be replaced by Kelly Davis. The transition will begin in August. Voter registration has begun at southside locations.

Administrative: LWVSCF has created and the board has approved detailed job descriptions for each leadership team and committee chair position. We can share them with other local leagues if they would be helpful. We are working with a website designer to make the website

more user friendly.

Los Alamos Report

By Barbara Calef, LWVLA Co-President

In April the LWV Los Alamos held two candidate forums for the local and regional candidates facing opposition in the primary. Each forum drew over 100 people. At our annual meeting we elected three new members to the board. Rather than planning new studies, the League will work to follow up on using existing positions to improve our county.

Los Alamos Public Schools Superintendent Kurt Steinhaus spoke at Lunch with a Leader about innovations in our schools, including:

- An elective program to help B or C students develop the skills they need to be successful in college.
- Saturday School, a voluntary program that offers students the opportunity to get extra help from teachers and catch up on schoolwork on Saturday mornings.

Current innovations at the high school:

- The Freshman Academy, a separate facility, has been developed for all high school freshmen.
- Dual credit allows the students to enroll in courses at UNM-LA.
- The Student Success Center offers students the option of obtaining a pass to receive individual assistance with subject matter. This is also available at the middle school.
- The high school now offers schedule flexibility for students who don't function well first thing in the morning.

Steinhaus is working to implement Project Search, a program to facilitate the transition from school to work for students with significant intellectual and developmental disabilities who are in their last year at the high school.

Another lunch speaker, Bill Hargraves, discussed plans to create a state-chartered middle school in Los Alamos. The idea for a charter school grew out of the XQ Competition to design a new kind of school that would use place-based education.

The schedule calls for the school to open in August 2020, but there are many obstacles to overcome before that. Of course, if it does open, the school system will feel a financial impact since the state funding that follows each student would be lost and budgets will have to be adjusted.

In July Jorge Rodriguez, a field organizer for the ACLU, and Nia Rucker, a former federal public defender who is now policy counsel and regional manager of the ACLU office in Las Cruces, NM, drove up from the southern border to speak to the group about the treatment of immigrants and the impact of the enhanced militarization of the border region on the whole community. Rodriguez and Rucker hope to get a bill passed in the legislature enacting a state-wide sanctuary policy. They also decried the inhumane conditions in the private prisons where many immigrants are held pending a decision on whether to grant them asylum.



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

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

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