



League of Women Voters of New Mexico

La Palabra

Vol. 67 No. 5

www.lwvnm.org

Summer 2020

League Contacts

LWVNM

Hannah Burling
president@lwvnm.org

Central New Mexico

2501 San Pedro NE, Suite 216
Albuquerque, NM 87110-4158
505-884-8441
Co-Presidents:
Karen Wentworth
Karen Douglas
office@lwvnm.org

Southern New Mexico

P.O. Box 8322
Las Cruces, NM 88006
Eileen VanWie, Co-President van-
week@yahoo.com
Kathy Brook, Co-President Kathy-
brook@comcast.net

Los Alamos

P.O. Box 158
Los Alamos, NM 87544
Barbara Calef, Co-President
Rebecca Shankland, Co-President
president@lwvlosalamos.org

Santa Fe County

P.O. Box 31547
Santa Fe, NM 87594
Laura Atkins, Representative
lwvsfc@gmail.com.

La Palabra Editor

Barbara Calef
bfcalf@gmail.com

La Palabra Publisher

Janet Blair
505-259-0203
jkblair@swcp.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.

The President's Corner

By Hannah Burling

LWVNM President president@lwvnm.org

Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy. That is what we do, and this fall it will be more important than ever

In the face of misinformation and the COVID-19 pandemic, we will need to do what we do best, which is to educate voters and get out the vote. As soon as we have all the dates and details for this November's election, we will need to publicize them and encourage voters to vote in spite of the hurdles. We are also using a new voter guide platform, Vote411. We used it for the primary election in June, but we will be expanding it to include local offices in areas of the state not covered by local Leagues. Our Voter Guide Editors and committees are doing a huge amount of work. We are also investigating ways to combat misinformation.

In April we were contacted by the Supreme Court of New Mexico and asked to submit an amicus brief in a very short period of time in the case of Riddle v. Oliver, which asked for mail in ballots for November's election. Felicia Orth of the League worked closely with Common Cause and with the litigation team at LWVUS.

A noteworthy quote from the brief by Levi Monagle, one of Common Cause's lawyers was, "The constitution is not a suicide pact." Unfortunately, we lost.

The LWVUS 2020 Convention was held in June, virtually. The way the staff and board of LWVUS were able to pivot from planning and putting on a live convention in Washington, DC to a successful Zoom convention was impressive.

.....(Continued on page 10



Table of Contents

President's Corner.....	1
The Pandemic Election.....	2
Summary of SB 4.....	3
Voter Services Report.....	4
Women's Vote Centennial.....	5
Program Report.....	8
Federal Public Lands Column.....	9
Plug is pulled on San Juan.....	10
Action Committee Report.....	11
Fair Districts for NM.....	11
Local League News.....	12-14

Conducting Elections During the Pandemic

By Barbara Calef

On Monday, March 30th, 27 county clerks filed a petition seeking “extraordinary writ relief” to conduct the upcoming primary election primarily by mail in an effort to prevent further spread of the novel coronavirus. They wished to send a ballot to all qualified voters, while providing service centers for those needing in-person assistance.

At 12:10 p.m. on April 1, an email arrived from the Clerk of the NM Supreme Court asking the League of Women Voters of New Mexico to submit a brief as *amicus curiae*, friend of the court, in support of the petition. The deadline for submission of the brief was April 8.

Los Alamos League member and attorney Felicia Orth agreed to help and began advising the League on how to assemble the necessary material. A short time later Common Cause New Mexico offered to participate with the League. Their attorney, Levi Monagle, ended up carrying the heavy load with Felicia’s support and the brief was filed on time.

Sadly, the Court did not rule in our favor. The Supreme Court decision was especially distressing because it meant that voters would have to engage with the postal service four times rather than two. On the Navajo Reservation home delivery is not provided to non-traditional addresses; often residents must travel long distances to pick up their mail. Meanwhile, in many cities the mail is sent to remote processing centers before being returned for local delivery. For example, Las Cruces mail is sorted in El Paso before being distributed in Las Cruces. As a result of confusion and delays, 2,000 requests for absentee ballots arrived the day after the deadline and 3,000 ballots arrived too late to be counted.

Sadly, the Court did not rule in our favor. The Supreme Court decision was especially distressing because it meant that voters would have to engage with the postal service four times rather than two.

During the primary election, when some of the reservations were closed to non-residents in an effort to keep out contamination, their polling places were also closed because state law decrees that they must be located where there is universal public access. Conducting the election during the pandemic also put much more stress than usual on county poll workers. Many poll workers are over 60 and chose not to risk exposure to the virus. As a result, polling places had to be consolidated throughout the state. In Santa Fe County the task of tabulating the absentee ballots was not completed until June 6 due to the shortage of election clerks. We need to recruit more young people for the general election; anyone 16 or over can be a poll worker.

This is what we know about the 2020 general election:

- Voters will be able to request an absentee ballot online at <http://nmvote.org/>. (The Secretary of State, Maggie Toulouse Oliver, says that will start in early August.)
- Those who do not submit a request may receive an application for an absentee ballot if their county clerk chooses to send them out. The county clerks are allowed to send them out starting September 14.
- The application for an absentee ballot must be received by the county clerk by October 20.
- Ballots will be sent out to those who request them beginning on October 6.
- There will be directions for returning the ballot on the outer envelope. The ballot should not be mailed later than October 27.
- The voter’s signature and the last four digits of the voter’s social security number are required on the outer envelope.
- Postage will be paid by the state as it was for the primary election.
- Absentee in-person voting begins on October 6.

Conducting Elections During a Pandemic

from page 2

- Early voting begins October 17 and ends October 31
- Election Day is November 3

Much remains to be determined. It is recommended that voters go online to check that their registration is correct, including their social security number.

The League is committed to working with our county clerks to educate the voters about how to vote safely and with confidence that their ballot will be counted in November.

Summary of S.B. 4: Temporary Elections Bill

By *Barbara Calef*

The elections bill that was passed by the legislature during the Special Session and signed by the governor is 15 pages long and the meaning of some provisions is subject to interpretation. Most of the provisions will expire on December 31, 2020.

The amendment that will not expire was introduced on the floor of the Senate. It allows registered voters not affiliated with a major political party to change their party registration and vote during a primary election. That party registration will continue in effect until they actively modify it.

Here is a brief summary of the some of the provisions that will expire:

- County clerks have the option to automatically deliver a mailed ballot application provided they notify the Secretary of State (SOS) at least 90 days before the general election. The ballot applications can be sent out beginning 50 days before the election. The application must be received by the county clerk by October 20.
- The SOS will implement the USPS intelligent bar code system to allow better tracking of the mailed ballots.
- The oath on the outer envelope of an absentee ballot will require only the voter's signature and the last 4 digits of the voter's social security number.
- County clerks are required to check this information and reach out to the voter if they forgot to sign it or fill in something on the envelope. Thus, the voter is given a chance to "cure" their ballot.
- There will be specific instructions for the voter on how to return their absentee ballot, including the recommendation that the ballot not be mailed after October 27.
- The absentee voter election board will recess at 11 pm if they have not finished tabulating ballots on election night and will work from 9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. on successive days until they have finished.
- A polling place on Indian Nation, Tribal, or Pueblo land will not be closed or consolidated with another polling location. Days and times of voting will not be modified. There will be at least one polling location within the boundaries of the Indian Nation, Tribe, or Pueblo. Tribal lands will be able to close polling places to outsiders in a public health emergency.
- The SOS will procure sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitizing supplies to distribute to county clerks and to early, mobile, and election day polling locations.
- The Secretary of Health may issue public health orders relating to the general election and make recommendations to mitigate health issues. If a health order is issued on or before 60 days prior to the election, the SOS will work with county clerks to implement changes necessary for the health and safety of clerks, staff, election board members, and voters. If a health order is issued within 60 days of the election, the SOS will provide guidance to county clerks on best practices, and may call a meeting of the Legislative Electoral

Health and Safety Task Force. The task force may authorize the SOS to implement procedures to ensure the health and safety of clerks, staff, election board members, and voters.

- The SOS will reimburse county clerks for “necessary and reasonable” expenses incurred as a result of necessary health and safety actions.
- The SOS will conduct a public information campaign to educate voters of the benefits of ensuring that their registration address is accurate.
- The Board of Finance (BOF) will authorize funding for SOS and DOH for “necessary and reasonable expenses.”

Provisions that were recommended by Common Cause and other organizations but not included in the bill:

- Allow county clerks to mail actual ballots to all voters active since 2015 and mail notice to voters if up date needed; (This option was removed with an amendment passed by the Senate Rules Committee.)
- Mail absentee ballots sooner (14 days earlier to allow more time for delivery by the post office);
- Expand polling hours;
- Allow an earlier start to counting absentee ballots;
- Allow counting of ballots received after poll closing times.

Voter Services Report

Diane Goldfarb

Voter Services Chair

Our Vote411 work for the primary seemed to be successful, and we received many good comments from people who used it. With little publicity we had over 11,000 users from all over New Mexico. In addition to the online guide, both the Los Alamos and Santa Fe County Leagues printed Voter Guides for the primary.

Voter Guide editors have begun work on Vote411 and the local guides for the general election, and questions to the candidates will be sent out soon. Vote411 will include all offices on the ballot throughout the state. In order to include the county commission districted races, we have contacted individual county clerks requesting GIS mapping data from them. As we hear back, the data are being entered into Vote411. This is a major project and is taking considerable time, but it will enable us to have a truly statewide guide. Exporting the information from Vote411 in order to print Voter Guides will be another big project. The Los Alamos League did it for the primary election, and we thank Akkana Peck for offering to do this for all the local Leagues for the general election. Representatives from all four of our Leagues are working together to produce a quality product for New Mexico voters.

Funding for promotion of Vote411 has been obtained from the Thornburg Foundation. As part of the promotion we will also be providing voter information, especially regarding the absentee ballot process. LWVUS will soon be unveiling a Spanish edition of Vote411, and as we go to press, LWVNM is trying to obtain some funding for a Spanish translation of a portion of the New Mexico guide. Vote411 will go live on September 15.

The Women's Vote Centennial and Our Commitment to Justice and Equity

By Meredith Machen, History Chair

The study of history helps us see the connections between the past and present and helps us learn how hard and how long people have fought for government policies such as fair and accessible elections and the expansion of human rights. At long last some of the stories of the bold, courageous, and powerful women who fought for full voting rights are getting a fraction of the recognition they deserve. Most names are obscured and forgotten.

During the coronavirus pandemic of 2020 fascinating articles have appeared describing how suffragists continued to fight for the vote through the much more virulent influenza pandemic that raged from 1918-20, killing 50 million people worldwide.

It's an ironic twist of fate that the long-planned celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the women's vote culminating on August 26, 2020, Women's Equality Day, are overshadowed by economic, social, and political crises. Nonetheless, women will persist in fighting for human rights. We are still fighting for the Equal Rights Amendment to be compiled into the Constitution nearly a century after Alice Paul proposed it in 1923.

Just as our foremothers persevered for voting rights, we, too, will make sure that our elections are not interrupted by the pandemic. We will explain how to vote by absentee ballot and will educate voters through our online Voter Guide <https://www.vote411.org/> about where candidates stand on issues.

We will continue to fight for better government and for every person's right to participate in shaping a better tomorrow. We have learned that the best way of overcoming our limited experience and perspectives is to study the past and to work with those committed to making the future a reality, not just a dream. Partly because women have the vote, we have more women than ever who are active in local, state, and national government advancing policies in the public interest. Using the transformative power inherited from our resolute American foremothers and forefathers, Americans will tackle unprecedented health, safety, social, and economic challenges exacerbated by our current pandemic. We will address the systemic and structural disparities which are increasingly apparent. We commemorate the 100th anniversary of the women's vote as part of the larger struggle for equality by reaffirming our commitment to strengthen democratic participation and inspiring future generations.

Selected Related Articles:

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/pasatiempo/sphere-of-usefulness-new-mexico-and-womens-suffrage/article_d3a8babc-6f97-11ea-ab2a-23fc6a5b19dc.html May 2020

https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/fighting-for-the-womens-vote-100-years-ago-in-santa-fe/article_b1e25398-266d-11ea-b195-8b0440d9608c.html January 2020

“Persevere Through the Highs and Lows.” What We Can Still Learn from the Suffragists Who Fought for the Right to Vote During the 1918 Flu Pandemic <https://time.com/5833604/1918-flu-pandemic-women-suffrage-movement/> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/02/style/woman-suffrage-movement-descend.html>

“My ___ Was a Suffragist: One hundred years after the 19th Amendment, suffragists' descendants consider how far we've come and how far we still have to go.” <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/02/style/woman-suffrage-movement-descend.html>

New Mexico played a significant role nationally in the struggle to obtain voting rights for women and getting the amendment through Congress. In October 1915, prominent suffragists from around the country came to Santa Fe to request Senator Thomas Catron, chair of the Senate Committee on Woman Suffrage, to stop withholding the amendment and allow it to be heard on the Senate floor. A group of 150 suffragists rallied on the Plaza; marched and drove through downtown Santa Fe past the State Capitol, ending up at Senator Catron's mansion. Today that is the location of the Santa Fe County Courthouse. Cathleen Cahill's blog describes how NM's Hispanic and Anglo suffragists worked together to organize the parade through Santa Fe to plead with US Senator Catron to support the woman's vote.

<https://www.womensvote100.org/the-suff-buffs-blog/2020/6/24/suffrage-in-spanish-hispanic-women-and-the-fight-for-the-19th-amendment-in-new-mexico>.

Upcoming Events to Commemorate the Centennial

In Santa Fe, on Sunday, August 23, from 2-3pm, there will be a car parade following the route suffragists took in 1915. Santa Fe County Commissioner Anna Hansen and Santa Fe City Councilor Renee Villarreal are preparing proclamations to commemorate the centennial.

Women's Virtual Celebration

The City of Albuquerque and the League of Women Voters of New Mexico invite you to save the dates for the week of virtual celebrations: Tuesday, August 18 through Wednesday, August 26, 2020.

The week-long celebration will conclude with a Zoom Party featuring special guests and women from all 33 New Mexico counties. The Zoom will celebrate women gaining the vote in a variety of ways. More details coming soon.

Participate in the virtual celebration of the 100th anniversary of the women's vote on August 26, 4-7pm!

<https://www.cabq.gov/culturalservices/the-womens-vote>

For more on NM's rich suffrage history, hear NMPBS journalist Megan Kamerick's discussion with Cathleen Cahill, Sylvia Ramos Cruz, Meredith Machen, and Carmela Scorcio Pacheco.

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/1ady52Da3WyuWdlaIvX9sM> Episode 2: The Final Push-NM and the Vote



Be sure to see PBS's American Experience: The Vote (a two-part documentary that aired nationally in July), <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/american-experience/films/vote/>

For more information about our history, see documents under the History Committee, <https://lwvnm.org/programs.html> Documents include the [“Suffrage Timeline with a NM Orientation”](#) and [“Key Accomplishments of the League of Women Voters of New Mexico, 1920-2020”](#) and contact Meredith Machen, LWVNM History Chair, projects@lwvnm.org

Nina Otero Warren

Nina Otero Warren was a member of the National Women's Party started by Alice Paul. She was instrumental in getting the Republican Party to support woman suffrage. Meanwhile her cousin Aurora Lucero and her family strongly supported the Democratic party, which had declared its support of women's voting rights. Otero Warren successfully lobbied Governor Larrazolo and state legislators to support ratification of the 19th Amendment. She is the only New Mexican and only Hispanic included among the most famous women in the suffrage movement. Her home, the Otero-Bergere House (now the Georgia O'Keeffe Research Center) at 135 Grant Ave. in Santa Fe is now a national landmark.



Nina Otero Warren,
photo courtesy of
NM state Archives

Please see <https://www.nps.gov/articles/20-suffragists-to-know-for-2020.htm> , <https://monumentalwomen.org/suffrage-movement/> <https://www.nps.gov/articles/new-mexico-and-the-19th-amendment.htm>

For more on Otero Warren, now recognized as one of the four diverse women who were instrumental in making the suffrage movement more representative and inclusive of equal rights, read the forthcoming book: *Recasting the Vote: How Women of Color Transformed the Suffrage Movement* by History Professor Cathleen Cahill. <https://www.uncpress.org/book/9781469659329/recasting-the-vote/>

To see what suffragists were up against, read “Article on Woman Suffrage Introduced in United State Senate by Hon. Thomas B. Catron Senator from the State of New Mexico” (1917). WASHINGTON GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE, Feb. 19, 1917, 82269—17026

Published by the League of Women Voters of Maine (69.129). <http://digitalmaine.com/lwvme/147>

Carrie Chapman Catt



Carrie Chapman Catt,
Library of Congress photo

In her address to the National American Woman Suffrage Association's (NAWSA) 50th convention in St. Louis, Missouri, President Carrie Chapman Catt proposed the creation of a “league of women voters to finish the fight and aid in the reconstruction of the nation.” Women Voters was formed within the NAWSA, composed of the organizations in the states where suffrage had already been attained.

Catt met with NM suffragists and officials in Albuquerque, on December 4-5, 1919 to organize ratification efforts. She had secured President Wilson's support of women's suffrage in 1918 after making it clear that women had proved themselves in the war effort. Catt worked closely with Senator Andrieus A. Jones, who replaced Senator Catron in March 1917 as chair of the Woman Suffrage Committee. Jones shepherded the amendment through Congress in 1919. On February 14, 1920 - six months before the 19th amendment to the Constitution was ratified, the League was formally organized in Chicago as the national League of Women Voters. Catt described the purpose of the new organization:

The League of Women Voters is not to dissolve any present organization but to unite all existing organizations of women who believe in its principles. It is not to lure women from partisanship but to combine them in an effort for legislation, which will protect coming movements, which we cannot even foretell, from suffering the untoward conditions, which have hindered for so long the coming of equal suffrage. Are the women of the United States big enough to see their opportunity?

which address is not required to match the voter's certificate of registration; or (2) an original or copy of a utility

Program Report

By Chris Furlanetto

At the April LWVNM Board meeting, the Board asked Hannah and Chris to submit our Transfer of Federal Public Lands (TFPL) position with a request for LWVUS concurrence at the June 2020 Convention. The concurrence would make the NM TFPL a national position which would be any state or local League could use for advocacy.

Hannah Burling and Chris Furlanetto put together an email message with our request, the position, and additional background information which Burling sent out to a massive list of ~1,500 League members. We received primarily positive feedback, but thought it would be a long shot to get the 2/3 approval needed by Convention delegates.

We then scheduled a (virtual) caucus presentation for delegates and observers to be held on June 22. Judy Williams and Barbara Calef, co-chairs of the TFPL study committee, worked with Furlanetto to create our presentation. You can watch the video of the caucus and find the slide deck on the home page of our website.

To our surprise, 190 League members signed up for our Zoom caucus! Burling hosted the lively Q&A session after the presentation. Convention delegates discussed the position when Williams made the motion for concurrence on Friday and again on Saturday before the vote. Williams's final comments were pivotal in making our case. We were watching online from our homes when 76% of the delegates voted in favor of the concurrence! And we thought 2/3 was a high bar! If we'd been able to have a watch party, there would have been champagne!

The position presented to the delegates included a minor clarification in wording that was suggested in a response to our mass email. This was simply to clarify which land agencies are subject to the sustained-yield multiple-use mandate. The LWVNM Board approved the changes during the July 18 meeting.

After the convention, in response to a New Mexican editorial opposed to the Administration's appointee to head the Bureau of Land Management, Burling and Furlanetto wrote an op-ed that was published in the Albuquerque Journal on July 12. It was a timely opportunity to publicize our position and our accomplishment with the concurrence, and to support Senators Heinrich and Udall. You can find the op-ed on our home page also.

The convention delegates also voted to concur with a Voter Representation / Electoral Systems position present-



ed by a coalition of state and local Leagues. This new position provides more specific guidance for League advocacy related to election.

Both positions adopted by concurrence at the 2020 Convention will be included in the next update of Impact on Issues.

Federal public lands are for all Americans

Guest column

By Hannah Burling And Christine Furlanetto

Published in the *Albuquerque Journal*, Sunday, July 12th, 2020

The League of Woman Voters of New Mexico (LWVNM) is seriously concerned about the Administration's nomination of William Perry Pendley to be director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Mr. Pendley has a long history of favoring sales of public lands to private entities. We believe his appointment would be a threat to BLM lands, not only in New Mexico, but also throughout the West. BLM lands comprise the largest portion of our federal lands. This is an issue that affects not only New Mexico, but also other Western states with large swaths of BLM land.

LWVNM recently completed a study on whether it makes sense to transfer certain federal lands to the states where they are located. We concluded that such transfers are not justified by history or validated by law and would not make economic sense. Furthermore, such transfers are likely to limit public access and negatively affect the environment. For these reasons, we are concerned about the current nominee to head the BLM.

The League study was initiated in response to an effort by some New Mexico legislators to enact a large-scale transfer. Utah has passed a law demanding such transfers, and other Western states are now considering, or have considered, similar actions. Such transfers could result in these lands being sold off to private entities. There is also a risk that the federal government would attempt to sell federal lands directly to private entities.

Our study culminated in the adoption by LWVNM of a position that we will use to advocate for the federal government to retain ownership of federal lands. We focused on the lands most at risk, those managed by the BLM, the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, such as wildlife refuges.

The core of our position is this paragraph: The League believes that federal public lands should benefit all Americans. The lands should remain under the jurisdiction of the federal government, with Forest Service and BLM lands managed according to a multiple-use, sustained-yield policy. We support improvements in management and regulation.

We also believe that if any sale or exchange is considered, it must not only be in the public interest, but also that a comprehensive assessment must be completed. Issues included in the assessment must include: environmental analysis, including air and water quality, biodiversity, endangered and threatened species; health impacts; environmental justice; suitability of the proposed land use; subsurface resources; financial/economic impacts; cultural resources; public access; management for fire and other natural disasters; and tribal consultation.

The League believes that federal public lands should benefit all Americans. The lands should remain under the jurisdiction of the federal government, with Forest Service and BLM lands managed according to a multiple-use, sustained-yield policy.

Our study committee reviewed legal analyses of the history of federal land ownership, as well as economic analyses related to proposals in specific states. We interviewed officials with the BLM, the Forest Service and the New Mexico State Land Office. We found no court-supported constitutional or legal basis requiring the federal government to relinquish ownership of its lands.

We thank our U.S. Senators Heinrich and Udall for their public statements of strong opposition to the nomination of Mr. Pendley. We will continue to monitor the status of federal public lands here in New Mexico.

San Juan Generating Station is De-Commissioned

by Judy Williams



San Juan Generating Plant. Photo courtesy of the Durango Herald.

The coal-burning San Juan Generating Station is scheduled to cease operations in 2022. The Public Regulation Commission (PRC) must approve a replacement source for the electricity generated by the plant. LWVNM sent the following letter to the commissioners on July 2. When they met on July 15, Judy Williams urged them to vote in favor of the 100% renewable replacement resources option, which she described as the “most sensible and beneficial option.”

This was her comment to the PRC: The League of Women Voters of New Mexico is asking you to cast your vote in favor of PNM’s 100% renewable energy solution. The portfolio proposed by the Coalition for Clean and Affordable Energy and the PRC hearing officers is the most sensible and beneficial option before you. This proposal would replace San Juan coal with 100% renewable energy and battery storage in the same school

district as the San Juan plant, and place large solar and battery projects in nearby McKinley County and at the Jicarilla Apache Nation in Rio Arriba County.

The alternative proposals do not provide the same economic or environmental benefits to the affected communities. Furthermore, the rate difference between the 100% renewable proposal and PNM’s gas-heavy one is negligible, as has been pointed out by others.

An economic analysis by UNM economist Kelly O’Donnell showed that the economic benefits of reclamation, building renewables and other activities are significant. We ask that you approve the 100% renewables option.

On July 29 the PRC commissioners voted unanimously to approve the Coalition for Clean and Affordable Energy option for 100% renewables to replace the San Juan Generating Station!

The President’s Corner

from page 1

Because it was online, many of us were able to attend caucuses and information sessions we could not have otherwise done. It was an inspiring and informative event.

LWVNM had a significant presence at the convention. Chris Furlanetto, Barbara Calef and Judy Williams put on a caucus for our Transfer of Federal Public Lands position that was very well attended and resulted in a national concurrence with that position. Karen Douglas was a panelist on the criminal justice caucus and spoke on the work of APD Forward.

We were recognized during the plenary session for our leadership in getting the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact passed by the NM legislature in 2019. I represented us on the drafting committee for the emergency resolution on racial justice, which passed at the convention and will give Leagues a way to take action on the issue.

Action Committee Report

By Dick Mason, Action Chair

The 2020 Special Session began at noon on June 18 and ended on June 22. The session was an unusual one, to say the least. Some practiced social distancing, though there were differences between the House and Senate on rules for this. In addition, the session was plagued by the outdated video and audio technology used at the Roundhouse. Remember, they had to be dragged in to the remote viewing era only a few years ago.

The governor needed to call a special session to address revenue shortfalls in the state budget owing to the combined effects of the pandemic and falling oil prices. The outcome of the budget hearings turned out to be somewhat less painful than anticipated. The legislators were able to use some federal funding and tap reserves while making cuts to capital outlay and enacting moderate across the board cuts in most agencies. The more difficult decisions lie ahead; the legislature will need to raise new revenue during the 2021 session.

SB4, the Temporary Elections Bill, was the only legislation the League supported in the special session. We are disappointed that it does not direct the county clerks to automatically mail ballots to qualified voters; it does not even direct them to send out absentee ballot applications. However, the act will ensure access to polling sites for Native Americans on tribal lands even if they are closed to the general public in the November election. It also simplifies the oath required on the outer envelope.

In addition, legislation was passed in response to the recent protests against systemic racial oppression. HB 5 creates a temporary New Mexico Civil Rights Commission, a bipartisan nine-member body that will review policies and develop policy proposals for laws for the creation of a civil right of action for violations of state constitutional rights. The commission will also review the use of qualified immunity as a defense in lawsuits against police. The commission will submit a report to the Courts, Corrections and Justice Committee by November 15. It will function until March 31, 2021.

HB 8 requires all police to wear body cameras when interacting with the public.

Looking ahead, we anticipate that the annual LWVNM December Advocacy Training will be conducted virtually this year rather than at the State Capitol. That will allow greater participation by those not able to travel to Santa Fe. We also have to prepare for possibility that access to the State Capitol will be limited during the 2021 Legislative session.

Fair Districts for New Mexico Report

By Dick Mason, Action Chair

The Legislative Council met on July 7th, but they did not create a redistricting task force as we had hoped. Fortunately, anticipating that failure to act, the Thornburg Foundation has provided funding for New Mexico First to convene a Redistricting Task Force. New Mexico First will work with others to determine who will serve on the task force and how it will function.

While the New Mexico First Redistricting Task Force is meeting, Fair Districts for New Mexico will focus on the following:

- continue to develop the membership of FDNM with a focus on political, ethnic & racial diversity;
- conduct virtual (or public if possible) events on redistricting reform aimed at developing public support for fair, transparent and accountable redistricting in 2021;
- conduct surveys of candidates for office to determine their position on redistricting reform;
- provide support to the Redistricting Task Force and
- meet with key legislators to gain support for redistricting reform.

Local League News

Los Alamos

By Barbara Calef

LWVLA produced its first primary voter guide this year to help voters with tough decisions, made especially difficult by the combination of the need to shelter at home and the large number of candidates running for Congress. The Voter Guide was distributed with the LA Daily Post and was also available on our website and at polling places in the County.

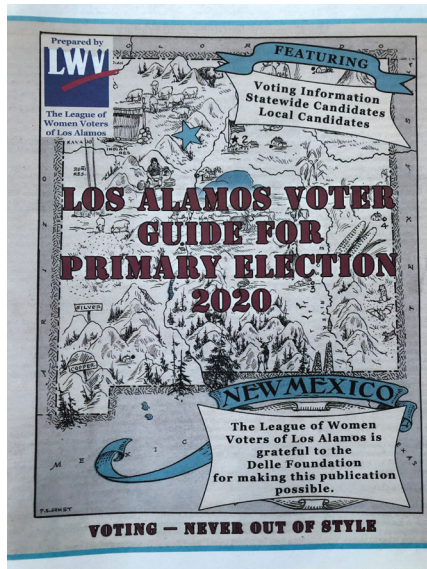


Photo by Barbara Calef

Our League quickly learned how to operate Zoom for the three candidate forums we held before the commencement of early voting. The forums were recorded and posted on YouTube where they were viewed 800 times by the end of election day. We also published ads and op-eds to let the public know how to vote by absentee ballot and where to watch the forums.

For our first virtual Lunch with a Leader program, Harry Burgess, the Los Alamos County Manager, spoke about the budget. He told League members that Los Alamos was less affected by the pandemic than many other counties because 95% of gross receipts tax comes from LANL, which is continuing to operate.

During subsequent Zoom meetings Heather Ferguson of Common Cause gave a debrief on the primary election and outlined her organization's goals for the Special Session of the legislature. A couple of weeks later Christine Chandler, our state representative, reported on the outcome of the session. She felt that the budget bill was reasonable considering the drop in revenue. However, she was disappointed with the elections bill for several reasons: It is very complicated; it leaves the decision whether to send out applications for absentee ballots to the county clerks; and there was no opportunity for public input regarding the amendment allowing registered voters not affiliated with a major political party to change their party registration and vote during a primary election.

At our annual meeting, also conducted via Zoom, the members voted for two new studies. Digital Privacy in the Relationship Between Residents and the Los Alamos County Government will be led by JoAnn Lysne and Akkana Peck. The second, Alternatives to Landfills, is led by Dave North. The digital privacy study committee has already met twice. With preparations for the general election and the studies, we have a full schedule!

LWVSFC Report

By Judy Williams, Liaison

The Santa Fe League has three new projects, all of which are in the process of being finalized:

- City of Santa Fe Good Governance, led by Jody Larson. It will focus on working with the City of Santa Fe on improvements to operations and public transparency. It came about as the result of a meeting with the mayor and two city councilors, at their request.

- Civil Discourse, led by Irene Epp. Some of it comes out of the League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo, CA, and some from observations of behavior by citizens and politicians at local government meetings.
- Outreach, led by Hannah Burling. This effort will focus on connecting with outside groups, as well as League members and other individuals, to encourage collaboration. Burling will work closely with the membership chair, Debbie Helper.

The late June calendar planning meeting yielded a quite full calendar for the coming year. A highlight will be a series of three sessions in September, in partnership with the Santa Fe World Affairs Forum. Maggie Toulouse Oliver will speak about foreign election interference and vote by mail issues. Also invited are Sarah Hood, a Santa Fe expert on disinformation and elections, and Lonna Atkeson, about relevant election issues and forecasts.

The Action and Advocacy Committee has contacted the City of Santa Fe regarding the development of the Mid-Town Campus (formerly the College of Art and Design and the College of Santa Fe). We gave them a gentle reminder about transparency in the development of a master plan.

Central New Mexico

By Karen M. Douglas, Co-President

In June the LWVCNM Board voted to postpone the August 29th Centennial Suffrage Banquet and minimize fundraising expectations. The Board also tentatively rescheduled the Annual Meeting to October when in-person attendance may be possible. The LWVCNM Bylaws permitted interim appointment of 2020 officers and directors to the board as the election of officers and directors will occur during the Annual Meeting and meanwhile board decisions are needed.

Six new members joined LWVCNM in June.

LWCNM held their initial trial Zoom Unit meeting on July 9 featuring the observations of the four delegates who attended the LWVUS Convention. Karen Wentworth hosted the meeting during which she, Mary Wilson, Jeanne Logsdon, and Karen Douglas discussed the Convention proceedings and pre-Convention Caucuses. Attendance by 20 LWVCNM members during this initial trial offered hope of increased member participation in subsequent meetings.

Karen Douglas will be initiating the LWVCNM Observer Corps in the fall using LWVUS guidance and advice provided by LWV San Francisco during the “Making Democracy Work in Criminal Justice Reform” caucus during the LWVUS Convention.

Linda Adcox-Kimmel, LWVCNM Director, has assumed office manager responsibilities. Due to the recent coronavirus social distancing precautions, routine office staffing was discontinued in early March, with a few volunteers covering telephone calls during the weeks leading up to the June 2 primary election. The LWVNM Board has moved the CNM office to 2501 San Pedro NE. The new location features a brighter, open environment and a conference room which may be reserved. At the July 2 meeting the board reviewed the schedule and plans to resume office staffing. As many current volunteers desire to remain in their homes as a health measure, additional volunteers will be needed when the office re-opens.

Also at the July meeting the board approved Voter Guide questions, making distinctions between the hardcopy publication and online questions. Mary Ellen Smith, Voter Services Chair, assumed responsibility for the 2020 printed Voter Guide and Lani DeSaulniers, a new LWVCNM Director, will assume Voter Guide distribution responsibilities from Andrea Targhetta.

At the June 24 APD Forward Zoom meeting the members of the group met with the new Community Safety Department (CSD). A recent APD shooting prompted Mayor Keller to form the CSD, which will be a Cabinet-level agency reporting to the Mayor's office and separate from APD. A 911 option will offer direct public access to the CSD, which will be a violence intervention program offering the community assistance for behavioral health and substance abuse incidents without armed police officers.

Members of the new CSD discussed alternatives to armed response. APD Officers responding to behavioral health calls typically detain the individuals, who are then taken to the UNM Hospital. New CSD approaches could result in the de-escalation of adverse situations without detaining individuals. Peter Simonson of ACLU agreed that changes to the professions staffing the new CSD could improve interactions with the public. UNM will also offer a new curriculum for social workers to provide this community service.

Discussion followed regarding the recent presence of armed civilian militias among peaceful "Black Lives Matter" protesters. Ed Harness halted the discussion and indicated that the Civilian Police Oversight Agency is currently investigating the alleged retaliatory arrests on June 22 and the protests of four 4 militia members. The results will be released following the investigation.

Southern New Mexico

By Kathy Brook and Eileen VanWie, Co-presidents

The much-awaited marker at Pioneer Women's Park in Las Cruces, recognizing the suffrage efforts of the Woman's Improvement Association, has been approved by the Pomeroy Foundation. A date for formal unveiling is yet to be determined.

Recent general meetings have focused on education with speakers Tracey Bryan from the Bridge of Southern New Mexico joining us by Zoom in May, followed by Dulcinea Lara, criminal justice faculty member at NMSU, Sireesha Manne, and Melissa Candelaria from the New Mexico Center for Law and Poverty in June. There have also been two unit meetings to discuss goals for justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, with a follow-up planned for August.

Voter Service activities include work on questions for the Voter Guide, exploration of collaboration with KRWG-TV on candidate forums, and the investigation of options for including voter registration and mail-in ballot information on city buses and in utility bills. Thanks to Kathy Brook's idea, Eileen VanWie's inspiration, and Jo Galván Nash's design skills, we are ordering yard signs for League members and others to celebrate 100 years of the 19th amendment and encourage people to vote early prior to November 3.

In conjunction with the national convention, several members were able to participate in caucuses including those on climate migration; criminal justice; increasing voting in areas with low turn-out; diversity; and web page management.

The League, Doña Ana County NAACP, and KRWG-TV co-hosted two programs on police reform and police oversight. On the programs, KRWG Director of Content Fred Martino, NAACP President Bobbie Green, and VanWie engaged in conversation with guests including the county sheriff, the NMSU Chief of police, the mayor, a city councilor, the state attorney general and the county district attorney. In addition, the LWVSNM Education Committee developed a paper on the Yazzie-Martinez case and wrote an op-ed was endorsed by the LWVNM.

Finally, we are preparing for a Board visioning lab/planning meeting with the goal of focusing on priorities at least through November 3. Discussion may also include the meaning of nonpartisanship in our current climate. We have also reactivated our Twitter and Instagram accounts in an effort to improve our visibility on social media.



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 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.