



# League of Women Voters of New Mexico *La Palabra*

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*The League of Women Voters of New Mexico, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.*

## **The President's Corner**

*By Hannah Burling*  
*LWVNM President: [president@lwvnm.org](mailto:president@lwvnm.org)*



Along with other members of the New Mexico League, I attended the LWVUS Convention in Denver at the end of June. There were inspirational caucuses, many opportunities for networking and exchanging information, changes to the bylaws and resolutions from LWVUS as well as from state and local Leagues. Here's the link to the items passed:

<https://www.lwv.org/league-management/council-convention/items-passed-2022-convention>

On the Friday of convention, the U.S. Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe v Wade* was handed down. There were only between four and five hundred of us in Denver since many delegates and observers participated virtually. We were very efficiently organized into a march on the Colorado State Capitol that afternoon. It was a great moment for those of us who participated, but there is a lot of work ahead for us in the coming months and years.

We are now looking at the potential overturning of *Obergefell* (marriage equality), *Lawrence* (same sex relationships) and *Griswold* (contraceptives access). SCOTUS will also be reviewing the Indian Child Welfare Act. We will need to make sure that these rights are protected in New Mexico.

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We are currently working hard on the General Election in November with Vote411, our online Voter Guide, covering the entire state, and our nonpartisan get out the vote efforts. These are areas where we can always use help. Please contact your local League or the state League to volunteer. I can be reached at [president@lwvnm.org](mailto:president@lwvnm.org).

LWVNM is continuing to work on redistricting, spent nuclear fuel, climate change, and elections. We have two ongoing studies, Judicial Selection and Tribal Law. There are many opportunities to be involved.

*.....More on page2*

## President's Corner from page 1

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico Education Fund, founded as a New Mexico nonprofit corporation last fall, has now been granted 501(c)3 status, which will greatly increase our ability to raise funds to support our voter services, including Vote411 and other educational efforts.

Our explainer video on how votes are counted and protected is in the final production stages and we hope to have it on our website and YouTube channel very soon!

## ***LWVNM responds to the June 24 SCOTUS ruling on Roe v Wade***

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico is deeply grateful to the 2021 New Mexico State Legislature and the Governor for the passage of the Repeal Abortion Ban Act. With this protection in place, we will continue to exercise our constitutional rights and make our own decisions about reproductive healthcare. It took foresight to pass this legislation and the League is thankful for New Mexico's leadership on this issue.

We call upon our policymakers to take further action ensuring the health, safety and freedom of all New Mexicans in light of the SCOTUS decision overturning Roe v. Wade.

The League of Women Voters of the United States President Dr. Deborah Turner and CEO Virginia Kase Solomón said in a joint statement that this ruling “will have devastating — and immediate — consequences across the country.”

Without the power to make our own decisions about our bodies, we become second class citizens.



Protest at the Capitol. Photo by Felicia Orth



## **NEWS from the LWVUS Convention**

### **League's Immigration Advocacy Elevated and Expanded!**

*By Meredith Machen, LWVNM Immigration Chair*

Delegates to the LWVUS Convention in June overwhelmingly approved a resolution elevating immigration advocacy as an important component of the Making Democracy Work Campaign.

Following is the resolution that LWVUS recommended as part of the Campaign, and which delegates approved 767 to 32:

Whereas the League of Women Voters has had a long-standing immigration position since 2008 and a strong commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), be it resolved that LWVUS actively advocates and supports Immigration Reform at all levels of LWV.

The underlined phrase allows local and state Leagues to ask their Congressional delegates to support immigration legislation in line with the LWVUS position.

Immigration has been listed as a LWVUS "Other Priority" for many years, but advocacy efforts have been few and far between since the national position was adopted in 2008 after two years of study and consensus meetings. Until now, LWVUS has held that immigration is a federal issue, thus under the sole purview of LWVUS - not state and local Leagues.

In January 2021, LWVUS sent a letter to the Biden administration applauding its plans for reforming immigration policies. This spring LWVUS called for ending Title 42, which was used to designate migrants for expulsion because of the risk of spreading COVID-19 and disputed the false claims that immigrants are flooding our borders. LWVUS staff initially told us that Congress has failed to advance immigration legislation in areas it supports, so there is little the League can do. NOT SO, we argued successfully. In the current hyper-partisan, tense political environment, the trusted, respected, non-partisan voice of the League is needed now more than ever.

The very few LWVUS Governmental Affairs staff will continue to focus on voting and elections, but they are eager to learn how they can partner on advocacy efforts with non-partisan organizations with immigration policy expertise. After the election, we will see renewed efforts to pass bipartisan legislation with popular and business support that would increase work permits and employment visas and expand legal status for some of the millions of immigrants whose lives are in limbo. Some bills aim to address worker shortages in construction, hospitality, agriculture, and science and the needs of our population who lack adequate health care, elder care, and sanitation. The U.S. is a country of immigrants, and we can no longer fail to address this issue.

The Immigration Steering Committee will work with members of the LWVUS Immigration Discussion Group and other LWV members to share proposed immigration policies at the state and local level. We can also advocate with our Congressional delegates and candidates to increase funding to address unacceptable backlogs in processing citizenship and visa applications and to enact policies for orderly immigration at the border. If you would like to join these efforts, please send an email to me at [meredith.machen@gmail.com](mailto:meredith.machen@gmail.com). Once you request to join the group, you will be sent a confirmation email approving you as a member of <https://groups.google.com/group/lwvus-immigration-discussion-group>. Thank you.

## **Statement of Position on Immigration, as announced by the LWVUS Board, April 2008**

The League of Women Voters believes that immigration policies should promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business, and employment needs of the United States; and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises. Provision should also be made for qualified persons to enter the United States on student visas. All persons should receive fair treatment under the law.

The League supports federal immigration law that provides an efficient, expeditious system (with minimal or no backlogs) for legal entry of immigrants into the United States. To complement these goals the League supports federal policies to improve economies, education, job opportunities, and living conditions in nations with large emigrating populations.

Impact on Issues 2020-2022, <https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues>, pp. 134-6.

## **LWVNM's Past Immigration Advocacy-UPDATE on Our Priorities**

For years, LWVNM has been a leader in both state and national immigration policy. With permission from the LWVUS, LWVNM has successfully advocated for undocumented residents to obtain drivers' licenses, to qualify for in-state tuition, to obtain professional licensure when qualified, and to access limited health care. The State of New Mexico has taken positive steps in areas where the federal government has floundered including prohibiting the use of state funds for immigration detention and incarceration and enforcement of other federal laws.

On the national level, New Mexico League members have worked with various state, local, and national organizations. Some may recall our concerted efforts to amend the Immigration position prior to and at the 2016 LWVUS-Convention. For months, LWVSNM immigration attorney Yvonne Flores and Kelly Burnham, a federal immigration judge, and I as LWVNM Immigration Chair, worked with our LWVUS liaison, Linda Wassenich, LWVTX, compiling information on the inhumane treatment of certain immigrants whose abuses were exacerbated by Bush's "Operation Streamline." This policy treated persons re-entering the country illegally through the southern border as felons. Therefore, we objected to the inclusion of "lack of a history of serious criminal activity" as a criterion for legal admission to the U.S. in the national position. (See Impacts on Issues p. 135 <https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues>) LWVUS acknowledged the validity of our objection but told us that positions once adopted are virtually impossible to amend. Instead of agreeing to change the offensive wording in the position, they added the following statement in Impact on Issues "Because of a request made in 2016, the League clarified part of its position on immigration "to mean that simple illegal re-entry is not considered a 'serious crime' for League advocacy purposes."

In August 2021, US District Judge Miranda Du, declared the immigration statute, Section 1326, an unconstitutional violation of the Equal Protection Clause. Making it a felony for immigrants from Mexico and Central America to re-enter the United States after deportation has "racist, nativist roots" because it treats one race differently. While Judge Du's U.S. v. Carrillo-Lopez decision still stands, it could be challenged by Texas and/or Arizona, which have recently enacted new laws. The conservative justices on the Supreme Court have indicated their willingness to consider immigration cases. LWVNM and Leagues across the country can now urge Congress to pass laws requiring humane treatment and due process for immigrants. These policy changes are among the priorities for League advocacy that we will be working on.

## **Nuclear Issues – Revising the LWVUS Position**

*By Karen Douglas*

During the June 2022 LWVUS Convention the Pennsylvania (PA) League introduced a resolution to revise the

national Position in Impact on Issues to reflect commercial nuclear energy as a GHG-free source of energy. However, the LWVUS Resolutions Committee advised them that a study would be required. The New Mexico League initiated a Zoom meeting on July 15 with twelve members from seven states available to consider the path forward. The initial draft NM Nuclear Issues Study Proposal was revised substantially by the California League to reflect safety concerns and prior international incidents involving nuclear power with emphasis on including both the positive and negative impacts of all clean energy sources with related cradle-to-grave costs. Revision of the Study Proposal by a subcommittee including members from several states will be completed very soon.

Although LWVUS currently has no Program Chair (Liz Bander, the previous chair, left the LWVUS Board in June) to address multiple state involvement in a LWVUS study, Jessica Capparell, LWVUS Director of Government Affairs (Advocacy), has advised NM and PA that a state study will be required. A Zoom meeting has been scheduled for July 28 with Ms. Capparell and members of the Pennsylvania and New Mexico state Leagues to recommend a path forward.

## ***Climate Crisis Looming Larger***

*By Judy Williams*

It is crystal clear that the planet is heating up and causing highly visible effects: hotter heat waves, larger and more destructive storms, larger and more destructive fires, and of course the devastating drought and floods. It's becoming harder to ignore the impact of the changing climate on Earth.

At the recent LWVUS National Convention there was much discussion of the climate crisis. This resolution was passed at the national convention:

*“We, as delegates of local Leagues assembled at the 2022 LWV US Convention, call upon the LWVUS Board and state and local Leagues to urge state and local governments to adopt and publicize Declarations of Climate Emergency appropriate to local conditions and take appropriate action to implement the Declarations of Climate Emergency.”*

### **Climate Emergency**

The motion: “we, as delegates of local Leagues assembled at the 2022 LWV US Convention, call upon the LWVUS Board and state and local Leagues to urge state and local governments to adopt and pub-

licize Declarations of Climate Emergency appropriate to local conditions and take appropriate action to implement the Declarations of Climate Emergency.”

LWVNM and the local New Mexico Leagues can now advocate with government entities to make climate action a priority. Of course, the NM League has been advocating for legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for years. We need to increase the effort!

While efforts to reduce emissions and slow warming are struggling the world over, the new government in Chile has reached a milestone. They have created a new constitution that enshrines water rights and makes the government responsible for adapting to and mitigating climate change. The constitution tackles a huge number of issues, and faces an uphill battle when it goes to a public vote on September 4. The public approved creating a new constitution to replace the widely-despised Pinochet-era one.

A sobering report on water resources in New Mexico has been produced by a team of climate scientists convened by the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources. The title is “Climate Change in New Mexico Over the Next 50 Years: Impacts on Water Resources.” <https://geoinfo.nmt.edu/ClimatePanel/report/home.html>

A great read is Kim Stanley Robinson’s Ministry for the Future. Yes, it is science fiction, not real-world, but it is based on real science. It envisions a future and an organization that acts as the advocate for future generations. Robinson sees some hope for the future.



## Photos from the LWVUS Convention 2022



NM delegates at Convention, clockwise from back left: Meredith Machen, Karen Douglas, Felicia Orth, Barbara Calef, Hannah Burling. Missing from photo: Rosmarie Frederickson



LWVUS President Dr. Turner dancing. Photo by Barbara Calef



Line dancing at the convention:  
Rosmarie Frederickson second from right  
Felicia Orth fourth from right. Photo by Barbara Calef

## **Redistricting Conversations**

*By Akkana Peck*

Tuesday July 19 was Round 1 of “Redistricting Community Conversations: Reflections on 2021 Efforts” for Northern New Mexico. These conversations are hybrid (zoom and in-person) meetings discussing whether the Community Redistricting Committee worked well, what could have been improved, and how to improve New Mexico’s redistricting process in the future.

The group was small, which made for excellent conversation and brainstorming. I spoke for LWVNM and LWVLA, emphasizing that we strongly support the Fair Districts for NM position that the Senate ignored the recommendations of the Citizen Redistricting Committee, and that districts should be drawn by an independent commission with a transparent process. (Most of the other attendees agreed.)

One of the meeting’s leaders had a slide show prepared, but she didn’t show it since our small group was all fairly knowledgeable about the redistricting process, and she thought sharing our ideas would be more useful than a canned slide show.

Some points brought out during the discussion: Getting redistricting by independent commission is a long process and we have to keep working for it. We can’t expect it to be perfect right away. People should be prepared for that and not overextend themselves at the beginning.

Incumbency protection (“buddymandering”) has been a big issue in NM redistricting. It’s something we have to do a lot of education about. (I loved the term “buddymandering, which I hadn’t heard before.)

The Citizen Redistricting Committee tried hard to be transparent, and did very well compared to a lot of government committees. They were open-minded about what maps could look like, and they really seemed interested in hearing different ideas. The fact that the CRC made the GIS files available so people could examine the maps in greater detail using whatever tools they preferred was applauded.

On the other hand, there were some problems. Several people mentioned glitches with the technology of the website. For instance, it was not possible to see the maps being discussed ahead of the CRC meeting that discussed them. That needs to be done better; also, they need to start earlier. One participant said they should actually start 3-5 years before the formal process, to give communities time to learn the issues and get direct citizen engagement.

(From LWVNM’s Dick Mason) Fair Districts tried to get the legislature to explain each of the changes they made to the maps from the committee. They were told to file an Inspection of Public Records request for that!

During the legislative session, it was clear that legislators had already decided by the time they got back to the Roundhouse which maps they were going to approve, especially in the Senate. “What power do we have?” asked one frustrated attendee. “None at all.”

We could do more to get communities involved, giving educational sessions and interactive workshops where communities can map their own districts. There was some brainstorming about how to design educational sessions for redistricting. Several people argued for training in understanding and making district maps. I mentioned some ideas I’d picked up at a caucus at the LWV National Convention a few years ago, where one League described how they’d set up contests for people to give cute names to their gerrymandered districts. Someone else suggested something like a Speakers Bureau where people could get trained to go forth and give workshops.

I mentioned at the beginning of this article that this was Round 1 of the community conversations. There will be a Round 2 beginning at the end of August, concentrating less on the last round of redistricting and more on how to do



it better next time. The schedule will be sent out to League members in early August.

## **Action Report**

*By Dick Mason, Action Chair*

### **Action Committee has a Tax and Revenue Subcommittee**

Legislative leaders have said that the 2023 legislative session will focus on tax reform, so we have formed a tax and revenue subcommittee. The members are: Laura West, Karen Wentworth, Kathy Brook, and Dick Mason. We will be attending the relevant Revenue Stabilization & Tax Policy Committee (RSTP) and Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) meetings. We will also be working with the Fairness Project to see if we can develop a common legislative agenda for the 2023 session.



### **Fair Districts for New Mexico (FDNM) Report**

- Once again representative Natalie Figueroa will sponsor a House Joint Resolution that, when passed, will put the question of creating an Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC) on the 2024 ballot.
- A survey has been sent to all to NM House Candidates, incumbent NM State Senators and all statewide candidates asking their position on an IRC.
- FDNM developed a 90-second animated video making the case for an IRC. FDNM will try to present it to relevant interim committees.
- The LWVNM will also work with Senator McKenna to see what steps we can take to make county redistricting more transparent.
- The NM First Redistricting Task Force has reconvened and will be recommending a constitutional amendment to create an independent redistricting commission.

Please check the Fair Districts for New Mexico website for the latest updates: <https://fairdistrictsnm.org/>

### **Interim Legislative Committees are meeting**

Much of the development of legislation for the next legislative session occurs in the interim committees that meet between June and November. You can see the scheduled meetings by going here: [https://www.nmlegis.gov/Calendar/Whats\\_Happening](https://www.nmlegis.gov/Calendar/Whats_Happening)

## **Modernizing the Legislature – Is Now the Time?**

*By Judy Williams*

Initiatives to improve the functioning of the NM Legislature seem to be gaining momentum. Of course, the issue is not new; the NM Legislature published a report in 2007 containing extensive recommendations about how to improve, or “modernize,” the Legislature. The League, along with Common Cause NM put out a paper recommending many administrative and process improvements. A growing coalition of organizations and individuals are gathering in support of two constitutional amendments to pay legislators and extend the length of sessions.

The UNM Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) is working on the project, thanks to the efforts of two legislators, who allocated part of their discretionary funds to the effort. They expect to survey all legislators and many staff in August. BBER has already conducted interviews with some senior staff. They will present preliminary findings to legislative committees during the interim meetings.



Common Cause is concerned that the idea of paying legislators hasn't polled well in the past; they are proposing to conduct a poll this fall and are looking for funding. They point out that the long effort to create an independent ethics commission took decades, even though it polled well. The public will have to be strongly in favor in order to counteract legislators' fear that promoting paying themselves will anger their constituents.

The Legislative Momentum Project, comprised of about ten legislators (all women) is drafting legislative proposals for compensation, session length and scope, and staffing. Outside good government groups are also working on draft legislation. One version, drafted in order to elicit ideas, can be found here: [nmethicsreform.org](http://nmethicsreform.org). Other materials include some Mind Maps, designed to show who would benefit from a paid legislature or longer sessions.

## ***Ethics Commission Update***

*By Judy Williams*

Several organizations and individuals have been meeting regularly on Zoom with the staff of the Ethics Commission. The coalition was formed several years ago in an effort to pass strong enabling legislation, ensure adequate funding for the Commission, and to guard against any attempt to weaken the Commission. Jeremy Farris, the Commission's Executive Director, attends the meetings. This has been an excellent way to keep up with the challenges facing the Commission and staff as well as to hear about their work. The Commission itself meets bimonthly.

The Commission has issued several advisory opinions and resolved cases involving conflicts of interest and misconduct. In addition to addressing complaints submitted to the Commission, the body considers and issues advisory opinions on what behaviors are and are not acceptable under current law. Requests for advisory opinions have come from all levels of government as well as businesses; the actual opinions are available on the commission website: [sec.state.nm.us](http://sec.state.nm.us)

*The Commission's research has once again shown that New Mexico has some of the weakest financial disclosure laws in the U.S.*

The Commission's research has once again shown that New Mexico has some of the weakest financial disclosure laws in the U.S. In response the Commission has prepared a financial disclosure act to repeal and replace the current disclosure laws. This will be on the agenda for the 2023 legislative session.

The Commission staff has worked to clarify who is required to file disclosure reports under current law and is working with the Secretary of State to send letters to those who had not complied as of mid-June.

The League, along with other good government organizations, was asked to comment on the progress of the Commission for a recent article in the Santa Fe New Mexican. One question raised was whether penalties are sufficient. The penalties are set by the legislature, and the Commission is requesting increases in penalties so they will become meaningful. The League, along with Common Cause NM and the NM Foundation for Open Government, believe that even with the inadequate money penalties, the public exposure can act as a deterrent to bad behavior.

# **The Significance of the Recent Castro-Huerta Supreme Court Decision for the Tribal Law Study**

By Rebecca Álvarez

The June 2022 Oklahoma v. Castro-Huerta ruling by the Supreme Court establishes that states have concurrent jurisdiction with the federal government to prosecute many crimes in Indian country. (1) The decision stands as a definitive step backward in the recent steady march toward progress that has characterized the body of laws governing tribal nations. Eight out of the nine most recent SCOTUS decisions around laws involving sovereign nations were decided in favor of tribes. (2) In particular, the McGirt v. Oklahoma decision from 2020 established that a significant portion of Oklahoma is Indian land (mostly Cherokee). Historically, there was a clear set of rules about a state's relationship to sovereign land. The 1832 Worcester v. Georgia decision stated that the State of Georgia had no authority over the territory of the Cherokee Nation because it was a sovereign nation. In his dissent to the Castro-Huerta decision, Supreme Court Justice and Indian law expert Neil Gorsuch correctly notes that "the decision established a foundational rule that would persist for over 200 years: Native American tribes retain their sovereignty unless and until Congress ordains otherwise. Worcester proved that, even in the 'courts of the conqueror,' the rule of law meant something." (3)

This and other upcoming decisions on laws governing Indian country (especially *Haaland v. Brackeen* testing the Indian Child Welfare Act) are important not only to tribal members, but to everyone in the country because they represent a move by the fossil fuel industry to soften and dissolve the protections afforded by tribal sovereignty. This move was most evident in the offer of free legal services funded by the fossil fuel industry to people attempting to retain Native foster children in violation of the wishes of their tribes and families (4). Of course, the benefit to extractive industries of weakening tribal sovereignty is obvious, as many of the nation's richest natural resources are located on tribal land. The tactics of those who would weaken tribal sovereignty are often based on misinformation and in some cases, falsified data, as recently explained by Cherokee journalist Rebecca Nagle in *The Atlantic*. (5) Given our nation's history of trampling the rights of sovereign nations to extract resources and land, and New Mexico's unique relationship with its tribes and pueblos, it behooves the LWVNM to educate ourselves and the New Mexico public about the important impacts of laws governing tribes. This is what the LWVNM's Tribal Law Study aims to accomplish. If you are interested in being added to the email listserve for the study, please contact Rebecca Álvarez at [triballawstudy@lwvnm.org](mailto:triballawstudy@lwvnm.org).

## **Recommended Reading/Listening**

- (1) Fonseca, Felicia And Lindsay Whitehurst. (2022, July 1). "Experts: US Court fractures decades of Native American law." Associated Press. Retrieved from <https://apnews.com/article/us-supreme-court-crime-native-americans-oklahoma-congress-98184e0e1d0085690bb340c99b48a90e>
- (2) Spruce, Shawn. (Host). (2022, July 11). "What's next after the U.S. Supreme Court's Castro-Huerta ruling?" On Native America Calling [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from <https://radiopublic.com/native-america-calling-6VAQ2M/s1!9f97a>
- (3) Ford, Matt. (2022, June 29). "Neil Gorsuch Couldn't Save Tribal Sovereignty From His Conservative Colleagues' Wrath." *The New Republic*. Retrieved from <https://newrepublic.com/article/166952/gorsuch-ka-vanaugh-fight-tribal-sovereignty>
- (4) Nagle, Rebecca. (Host). (2021, September 13). "Pro Bono." On This Land. [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from <https://crooked.com/podcast/5-pro-bono/>
- (5) Nagle, Rebecca and Allison Herrera. (2022, April 26). "The Numbers Are All Wrong." *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/04/scotus-oklahoma-castro-huerta-inaccurate-prosecution-data/629674/>

## **LWVNM Spent Nuclear Fuel Storage Annual Report**

*By Karen M. Douglas*

License applications for two privately owned Consolidated Interim Storage Facilities for spent nuclear fuel were submitted to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) in 2018 with the Texas site on the New Mexico border, five miles from Eunice, NM and the New Mexico site in Lea County midway between Carlsbad and Hobbs, NM. The LWVNM Spent Nuclear Fuel (SNF) Storage Safety Study was approved by the 2017 LWVNM Convention delegates and a detailed four-year study followed. Committee members reviewed and commented on both the NM/Holtec and TX/Interim Storage Partners (ISP) Environmental Impact Statements with reports submitted to the U.S. NRC. Consensus questions were developed and discussed during local League Consensus meetings and the final SNF Storage Safety Position was adopted by the delegates at the 2021 LWVNM Convention. Following adoption of the position, LWVNM sought to request concurrence by the 35 Leagues in states with Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installations (ISFSI), focusing initially on states with the most nuclear power plants and those with problematic SNF storage conditions.

Outreach for concurrence was initiated in May 2021 by Hannah Burling, who made the announcement during the LWV Presidents' teleconference. Karen Douglas and Bobbi M. Riedel developed a SNF Storage Safety Powerpoint briefing for educating state League contacts with existing ISFSIs. The presentation was scheduled for July 17, 2021 on Zoom. Outreach to state Leagues also gathered additional interest during the June 2021 LWVUS Council.

*Attempts during the 2022 Regular Session to halt Holtec progress through legislation (SB54/Steinborn & HB127/McQueen) were not successful as attorneys advised that the State's authority was very limited.*

U.S. NRC granted a Construction and Operating License for the 1st phase of TX/ISP CISF in September 2021, although litigation filed with the U.S. Court of Appeals has stalled site construction. The U.S. NRC issued a Final Environmental Impact Statement for the HOLTEC CISF July 2022. However, the Nuclear Safety Evaluation Report and Construction and Oper-

ating License have been delayed until January 2023 while the NRC awaits a response to the Request for Additional Information they made last winter. Attempts during the 2022 Regular Session to halt Holtec progress through legislation (SB54/Steinborn & HB127/McQueen) were not successful as attorneys advised that the State's authority was very limited.

The December 2, 2021 Federal Register Notice requesting public comment on Consent-Based Siting of Federally Operated Consolidated SNF Storage Facilities was followed by a briefing from the U.S. DOE Office of Nuclear Energy Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Huff offering a historical perspective (prior US DOE 2015-16 Consent-Based meetings prompted the NM/HOLTEC & TX/ISP license applications). LWVNM responded with a six-page report addressing the 16 questions posed by U.S. DOE.

Karen Douglas and Bobbi M. Riedel presented the LWVNM SNF Storage Safety Position to the LWVIL Issues and Advocacy Convention on March 8, 2022. Eleven nuclear power plants are operating in Illinois and congressional action has been introduced by the state's congressional delegation. The subsequent review of the presentation provided feedback for improvement prior to addressing additional state Leagues. The presenters anticipate speaking to the California League since the most problematic SNF storage site, with corroding canisters adjacent to the ocean, is located at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station near San Diego, California.



# Local League News

## **Santa Fe County**

*By Jody Larson, SFC Liaison*

The LWVSFC board held our first meeting of the League year on June 21. Irene Epp was appointed a new board member, and a new Executive Committee was appointed. We reviewed and approved job descriptions for the officers and directors, updated many internal operational documents, and signed conflict-of-interest forms.

LWVSFC was evicted from our office a few months ago (our landlord sold the building), so we decided to try going office-less, at least for a while. We placed many items in storage, and recently our locker was broken into and several items were taken. As a result, we have updated our inventory and gotten a much safer lock. We will receive \$500 from our insurance.

We have 135 members and an updated “Ways to Participate!” with nine possible activities for new and current members to consider.

Our Action and Advocacy Committee is now under the Program VP. We continue to monitor the city’s Midtown Campus redevelopment project, which now appears to be in its third iteration. We have encouraged LWVSFC members to participate in reviewing the proposals for renovating or replacing the obelisk at the center of the Santa Fe Plaza, which was damaged by activists over a year ago. This project is part of the city’s Culture, History, Arts, Reconciliation and Truth (CHART) initiative, which has remained on schedule and will issue its final report next month. The committee is also following other proposed development projects in the city, reviewing a report on Growing Housing in Santa Fe from the local Association of Realtors, and preparing to follow the next iteration of review of our city charter, which takes place at least every ten years; the last one was in 2013, when a former State Supreme Court Chief Justice chaired the commission.

Our 2021-2022 student interns celebrated the completion of their terms with us at a recent luncheon. We have one new intern for this year, and our team members are working with them (preferred pronoun) on a plan for the coming year.

Voter Services committee members have been busy planning activities for the coming elections. We are exploring collaborations or outreach, or both, with several local groups, as well as with the County Clerk’s outreach coordinator. The local NAACP has formed a new voter registration and outreach program, and we are working with them on mutual support for the future. In addition, we are working to continue current and proposed Youth Advocacy projects.

Our Fundraising Committee is looking forward to working with LWVNM on revised policies and programs for mutual fundraising support.

We had good attendance at our Calendar Planning Meeting on July 13, including three new members. We proposed an aggressive calendar, including a possible series on climate change that would be open to the public, including one on wildlife impacts featuring a Nobel prize-winner. All events now need to be firmed up. Stay tuned!

## **Central New Mexico**

*By Karen Douglas, CNM Co-President*

LWVCNM membership again reached the 2020 pre-pandemic total of 202 and the in-person Annual Meeting held May 14th at the Sheraton with select subsequent hybrid meetings may have contributed to the desire by members to attend in-person with more opportunities to converse and discuss issues.

### **LWVCNM Unit Meetings July through September 2022**

The July 14th meeting will be hybrid with in-person venue in the 6739 Academy conference room and bring-your-own-lunch for this initial event. Future unit meeting plans will be reevaluated following this event outcome. LWVCNM held the annual Calendar Planning meeting on June 11 via Zoom to identify speakers with topics through August 2023 and members willing to coordinate these monthly unit meetings.

**Thursday, July 14, Noon** - Focus on Constitutional Amendment 1, Permanent Funding for Childhood Education via the Land Grant Permanent Fund

**Thursday, August 11, Noon** virtual (Zoom-only) - *Vote-ER*, Healthcare-based Voter Registration, Dr. Halea Meese, a resident physician in UNM Department of Family and Community Medicine, will speak about Health Care Based Voter Registration.

**Thursday, September 8, Noon** - Voter Education Part One: Mid-term Elections from the Four County Perspective; A panel of County Clerk representatives from Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrance and Valencia Counties will address any new procedures/challenges/issues from the June primary and anticipated new procedures/challenges/issues for the November elections. Additionally, we would like to better understand how CNM members can assist with the upcoming elections: administrative tasks, observers, poll workers, registrars, etc.

The LWVCNM **Voter Guide committee** will resume activity during August. Discussions among board members during the July 7 LWVCNM Board meeting indicated that a printed guide covering Bernalillo and Sandoval counties with a smaller printed VG for Valencia and Torrance counties may be attempted. Prior four county coverage was only by online [Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org). However, most of the calls to the LWVCNM office indicate that residents, regardless of internet availability, may be uncomfortable with the technology and prefer the printed media. The initial Torrance/Valencia County version may be distributed only to County Clerks for polling places and public libraries.

**APD Forward** – Initial requests by City of Albuquerque (CABQ) to Federal Court requesting suspension of monitoring many of the 276 measurable paragraphs of the 2014 Consent Decree with the Department of Justice (DOJ) due to long-term compliance were withdrawn as additional clarification is required. APD Forward expected this may be due to elevated concerns regarding behavioral health interactions with the Albuquerque Police Department (APD). APD Forward will meet with the Compliance Bureau (Internal Affairs UOF investigations) on July 12 and participate in AMICI testimony during the July 26 Federal Court hearing reviewing the Independent Monitor's 15th Quarterly Report (IMR).

Highlights of the Independent Monitor's 15th Quarterly report indicate significant improvement since issuance of the 14th IMR. The 2015 Consent Decree/Court Approved Settlement Agreement (CASA) between the U.S. DOJ and CABQ includes 344 paragraphs, 276 of which are measurable with quarterly progress reported.

## **Southern New Mexico**

*By Kathy Brook and Eileen VanWie, SNM Co-Presidents*

League members have continued to participate actively in the recently formed Las Cruces Coalition for Attainable Housing. The goal of the group is inclusion of a housing component in the city's proposed bond issue. League members have played a significant role in the coalition, meeting with the mayor and city council members, attending public input sessions concerning the bond issue, and sharing information widely.

Interactions with the community under the auspices of NM Listens have also continued with listening sessions attended by high school seniors, contacts with the Tortugas Pueblo community, and plans for a session organized through the Las Cruces Green Chamber of Commerce.

The May general meeting featured Linda Scholz, the first Vice President for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at NMSU. In June, the speaker was Rebecca Reyes, from the NM Public Education Department (PED), filling in with little warning for the previously scheduled speaker. Ms. Reyes was able to provide details on the Hispanic Education Act, the Bilingual Multicultural Act, the Black and Indian Education Acts, and the work that PED is doing to implement these laws.

Op eds have been published on education and primary elections in NM, including the new rules generating primaries somewhat more open than previously, and a letter to the editor was published concerning the recent death of a 75 year-old woman in a confrontation with police. Eileen and Kathy also sent a message of appreciation to the Otero County Clerk in support of her stand on secure elections and accurate results.

The board held a visioning session in early June to establish priorities for the year and the calendar for the next few months. June was also the occasion for a semi-annual new member orientation. Two of our newer members have taken on the job of League archivist, while two others are actively raising the League's visibility through Facebook and Instagram.

We are pleased to report that our grant application to El Paso Electric's Community Partner Program has been successful in obtaining \$1500 in financial support for printed copies of our Voter Guide for distribution in Doña Ana County.

## **Los Alamos**

*By Barbara Calef, LWVLA Co-President*

Our primary election Voter Guide was delivered to all Los Alamos households on May 5. The Voter Guide was also available at the polls, in the libraries, and in the senior centers. The primary election proceeded smoothly.

Representative Christine Chandler was the speaker at Lunch with a Leader in May. She encouraged the League to support Constitutional Amendment 2. If passed by the voters in November, it will create an exemption to the anti-donation clause so that the state could invest directly in programs to help low-income households with hook-ups for broadband and other essential services.

Rep. Chandler announced that residents will receive three rebates this year. One would arrive in May, a second in July (income tested), and a third in August (part 2 of the May rebate). She commented that giving rebates is not a policy; it's a quick way to address some of the budget surplus. For the 2023 legislative session, she said there will be a push to lower income taxes, but she is reluctant to do so because oil and gas income won't last forever and it's not easy to raise taxes once they have been cut. The Interim Tax and Revenue Stabilization Committee, of which she is the chair, met most recently on July 5-6.



In June the Lunch with a Leader speaker was Claudia Borchert, who is the Climate Change Policy Coordinator for the NM Environment Department. Borchert explained that, as a result of an executive order from the Governor, the Climate Change Task Force was created to commission studies and create partnerships.

Climate Action Teams work under the umbrella of the Task Force on mitigation strategies as well as adaptation and resilience. Mitigation, Borchert's focus, is the effort to reduce greenhouse gas levels. Adaptation and resilience refer to the ability to rebound and thrive despite climate change. She listed the various policies that are being implemented now, saying that they will reduce emissions in the state to the 2005 level. However, more action is needed to reach the goal of 45% below the 2005 level.

As we know, having failed to pass a hydrogen hub bill during the 2022 Legislative Session, the Governor signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming agreeing that the four states will compete jointly for some of the funding allocated in the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act passed last year. She has ordered the state agencies to work to promote development of hydrogen. Borchert reassured concerned League members that each project will be evaluated and only clean hydrogen projects will be approved. She said that hydrogen can't be cut off as an option.

Three delegates represented the Los Alamos League at the LWVUS Convention in Denver in June. Felicia Orth, Rosmarie Frederickson, and I (Barbara) attended in person. We found much to praise - the food, the camaraderie, the caucuses and workshops, the great increase in diversity in age and ethnicity. Felicia and I were especially impressed with the field trip to the Denver County Clerk's Office, which handles the ballots for 500,000 voters. During the plenary sessions the delegates were asked to debate and vote on program, budget, bylaws changes, and resolutions. Most of the proposals passed by wide margins.

The exception was the first bylaws amendment. The LWVUS Board recommended four changes to the bylaws. Find the updated bylaws here: <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/bylaws/bylaws-and-certificate-in-corporation>. Three of them were unobjectionable. However, the first amendment raises many concerns that were not addressed by the leaders. (They seem to be focused on increasing membership.) When implemented, no earlier than January 2024, per member payments will be eliminated. Instead, membership dues "will be shared by LWVUS." The bylaw states that "Allocations to LWVUS shall not exceed one-third." It was suggested that there will be a "pay what you can" option, but that is not part of the bylaw. No advice was offered as to how the local Leagues are to plan their budgets, or who would determine the share of the dues going to the local, state, and national Leagues. Let's hope we can preserve our grassroots structure.



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

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