

**Sustainability Consensus Meeting**  
LWVABC Evening Unit  
January 16, 2007 @ Cherry Hills Library

Facilitator: Donna Hill

Recorder: Norma Murchison

Resource: Gayle Barlow, Los Alamos League

Number participating: 13 LWVABC members plus facilitator, recorder and resource.

Presentation and discussion: Approximately 1½ hours

Four questions approved by LWVNM Board of Directors were presented for consensus.

The Facilitator explained the Consensus/group discussion procedure and ground rules for discussion. The Resource person gave background information and read the Los Alamos Sustainability position (1995; 1997; 2004).

**Question #1.** Sustainability is defined as “meeting the needs of the current generation while not impairing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Should League support for any position or action be conditioned on its impact on sustainability?

Questions raised:

- Would this mean that Sustainability is the most important and overriding principle guiding the decisions of the LWV?
- Since Sustainability is already used by the LWV in decision-making, what difference does it make if we go through this process?
- Why is Sustainability an issue now? It has been a national issue for a long time. This issue cuts through the fabric of all business, manufacturing, production and government activities. It is critical to decisions on Natural Resources.
- What does the word “conditioned” really mean? Does it cut through all issues and trumps the other criterion.
- Sustainability is a broad concept. How would we evaluate whether LWV met the Sustainability requirement?

Discussion:

There seems to be no room in it for the tradeoffs, balances and compromises often needed when dealing with complex issues.

The LWVNM has been dealing with sustainability issues all along--the environment, land issues, water issues, economics, and social issues. The League is going in the right directions.

Sustainability is more like a process guideline than a goal. It is similar to Native American deliberations that always consider the effect of their decisions on the “Seventh Generation.” This concept is very exciting and very needed.

Consensus:

- Stay with the sentences in general but tweak a word or two. For instance, use "consider" rather than "conditioned" in the last sentence to read: Should the LWV “consider” the impact of sustainability in deliberations on any position or action. Another suggestion was to change the phrase “not impairing the ability of” to “improve the opportunity.” With these two changes the introduction would read:

- “Sustainability is defined as meeting the needs of the current generation while improving the opportunity of future generations to meet their own needs
- The LWV will consider the impact of sustainability in all deliberations involving positions or actions.

**Question #2.** Do LWVNM members believe that active, educated citizen participation in a democratically organized system of governance is essential for sustainability?

Discussion:

How could the LWVNM say no to this statement? Education is our guiding principle. Education should always have priority. The paradigm for League action will change significantly. Many attitudes will have to be changed. The alternatives to a democratically organized system of governance could lead to chaos, war and terrorism. An educated citizenry ensures stability and peace.

What does education mean? Is it the same as informed or knowledgeable? It would be elitist to require that the citizenry obtain college degrees. All citizens have a right to vote. Our Democracy has a very diverse citizenry. The LWVNM should not be perceived as representing only the college-educated citizenry.

Consensus:

The group agreed with the Governance statement.

**Question #3.** Do LWVNM members believe that state economic policies and public finance should be more closely tied to the natural resource base of the economy?

Discussion:

- Natural Resources are finite. It is so easy to lose sight of the impact on issues like population growth, land development, agriculture, and manufacturing on natural resources like water. But you can't have an economy if you don't have natural resources.
- We know that people and technology change. There have been prestigious groups like the Club of Rome that predicted the end of the world because of famine etc. However in 1982 the Club changed its position noting that people can change their behavior and there are continuous technology innovations.
- The economic paradigm will have to change. For instance in dairy farming. Waste products such as manure could be used to generate electricity. This paradigm will require massive education, attitudinal change and new technology.

Consensus:

The group agreed with the Natural Resource and Economic Development statement.

**Question #4.** Do LWVNM members believe that social policies should equip all members of society to participate in and contribute to a sustainable society?

Discussion:

- This statement sounds like Motherhood, Apple Pie and the American Flag.
- Examples of social policies include fair wages, health care, nutrition, education, welfare policies etc.
- Sustainability does not mean a redistribution of wealth or economic equality.
- It is our responsibility to make resources available to those in need. All individuals should have opportunity and equal access. Those who have had it good should give back to society.

- These statements call for action. What action should the LWVNM take? What are the priorities? What is the process? How are the four statements tied to sustainability?

Consensus:

The group agreed with the statement on social policies.

**Conclusion:**

Members agreed that the evening had been interesting and productive.