

Notes From Meeting, October 11, 2006, Las Cruces League of Women Voters

Kathy warned us up front that this was not an informational meeting, but that our purpose was to see if we could come to consensus on the various issues involving the State League's response to sustainability issues.

She passed out the two page form which included some possible consensus questions and some discussion points and examples. She also pointed out that our feelings about sustainability might conflict with our stated positions on economic development. But we only got around to discussing that at the end of the evening.

First, she asked whether we felt that the League should have an over-all position on sustainability. We got into a discussion about just what is sustainability and we did seem to have consensus about that. We agree with the definition given at the beginning of the introduction: sustainability is defined as meeting the needs of the current generation while not impairing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.. And we believe also that League support for any position or action should be conditioned on its impact on sustainability.

We further believe (the first bullet) that sustainability may be imperiled by human activities that are stressing Earth's biological and physical support systems.

We got hung up on the "precautionary principle", not understanding exactly what it means. Some quotes from members: "better to err on the side of precaution", we should not postpone action because we're not sure", "precautionary principle is important", "do no harm", but no-one felt comfortable that we could endorse the second bullet statement. There was some agreement that this group would support a government insisting on regulatory systems which might weed out the most egregious unsustainable projects and systems. Some quotes: "What are burdens?", "Does the burden of proof rely on regulators or on the planners?".

We seem to have consensus on the statement under governance which says that LWVNM members believe that active, educated citizens' participation in a democratically organized system of governance is essential for sustainability.

We also believe that League should consider sustainability in deliberating on all its positions and directions.

Some quotes under Governance: "If we allow corporations as much access to the government as they do now, how can we assure ourselves of sustainability?", "What can New Mexico do to enhance sustainability? Can states have higher standards than the feds?", "Maybe we should work from the bottom up, instead of from the top down.", "Maybe we should encourage local sustainability?"

There were many comments like "Maybe the League should work locally to preserve sustainability."

Moving on to natural resources and economic development, there was discussion but no consensus on regulations which would preclude some kinds of economic development in the state that would not be sustainable, such as Intel or dairy farms.

We never did get into Social Policies.

By this time it was close to 8:30 and people were getting tired. But one last quote, because I think that, though it was not a consensus, it was an interesting concept: "Should we rely more on participatory decision-making instead of representative decision making?"

notes submitted by Marnie Leverett