



La Palabra

The Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of New Mexico

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In This Issue

**Greater Las Cruces League's
Study Report on
Immigration Issues**

ELECTION

Tuesday

November 7

Source of illustration:
Cover of LWVUS
brochure "2006 VOTE"
a step-by-step guide to
voting and Election Day

Americans have a huge stake in the November 7 election. The outcome will determine the course of the nation. On November 7 the following will be elected:

- 33 Senators (1/3 of the total 100). Senators serve six years. New Mexico has two Senators. The seat currently held by Jeff Bingaman is up for election.
- All 435 members of the House of Representatives. Representatives serve two years. New Mexico has three Representatives. The seats currently held by Tom Udall, Heather Wilson, and Steve Pearce are up for election.
- State of New Mexico offices, including Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Auditor, Treasurer, Attorney General, and Commissioner of Public Lands, and State of New Mexico district offices.

VOTE 411 (www.VOTE411.org) *

The One-Stop-Shop for All Your Election Information Needs

This election season the League is expanding its traditional voter education tools [by] launching *VO TE411* (www.VOTE411.org), an easy-to-use, non-partisan, Web site for election-related information. *VO TE411* provides both general and state-specific data, including a polling place locator that allows users to key in their addresses and obtain their polling locations. Help for overseas voters is also part of *VO TE411*. *VO TE411* is where voters go for easy access to trustworthy election information.

There is no other Web site that provides this level of comprehensive, state-specific information. Even within a state most people do not know what state or local government agencies to turn to on this subject. The ability to go to one site – *VO TE411* – for information on multiple states is especially appealing to families and individuals who are mobile.

VO TE411 provides:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| ✓ Election dates | ✓ Voter registration forms |
| ✓ Voter qualifications | ✓ Polling place locations |
| ✓ Registration deadlines | ✓ Contact information for elections officials |
| ✓ Absentee ballot information | ✓ Data on candidates in federal, state and local races |
| ✓ ID requirements | ✓ Ballot measure information |
| ✓ Early voting options | ✓ Other resources |
| ✓ Voting machines | |

* Excerpted from *The National Voter* October 2006, p. 20.

President's Message

VOTE!!!

Do you like the League slogan on our front page? Now there's a good four-letter word.

Thank you all for your work on forums and debates, producing and distributing the *Voters' Guides* for your communities, letters to the editors of newspapers in support of our issues, and working at the polls. Thanks for your presence at local and legislative committee meetings, and for your upcoming 2007 Legislature lobbying.

In this Fall Issue is a letter requesting support for our Education Fund (tax-deductible) and/or our Operating Fund, the advocacy part of our League mission. Not since June 2003 have we solicited your financial help. We haven't had the expense of office rental since 2004. We expect our costs to be greater in 2007. Thanks for thinking of us.

We plan a public educational forum in December 2006. League Day at the Legislature is scheduled for January 30,

Sunshine Week programs and information in March. The LWVNM Convention will be held in Las Cruces May 19 and 20. There will be more.

Read this issue for the local League reports and their activities. Read what the study groups are doing. There's a big article on immigration. Two of our state members volunteered to serve on the new three-year LWVUS Immigration Study. Five were selected from across the country but neither one of ours. Did that stop them? Just read what they're doing in Las Cruces!

Let's hope that the election runs well with few problems and that the people we elect have the energy and dedication to their locality, their state, their nation and world affairs that the League of Women Voters members exhibit every day. Enjoy your membership and continue to participate however and whenever you can. See you soon.

Marilyn Morgan

Board Meeting Summary

September 23 meeting in Los Alamos

Business

- Planned to meet with Death Penalty Coalition on October 13
- Added PMP Rebate item to Operating Budget for nationally-recruited members
- Created Finance Committee of three (two board members and treasurer)
- Agreed to reimburse Los Alamos League for rental of Fuller Lodge for board meeting
- Withdrew coalition participation from CCAE at this time
- Announced that the New Mexicans for Campaign Reform (NMCR) coalition

- has disbanded
- Kathy Campbell will report results of Governor's Task Force on Campaign Finance and Ethics Reform
- President was authorized to purchase liability policy for LWVNM
- Authorized fund-raising letter for fall delivery to members

Announcements

- Drug Policy information on treatment for pain has been added to web site
- LWVNM archives will be stored in the UNM Southwest Collection

- A public forum will be held in December to educate the public on meeting with legislators
- League Day at the Legislature is slated for January 30, 2007
- *VotersKey* will be published in January 2007
- Silent Auction is planned for May 19-20 LWVNM Convention in Las Cruces
- Next board meeting will be in Albuquerque on November 11

Citizen Lobbyist's Training

In preparation for the 2007 Legislative session, the LWVNM is planning a citizen lobbyist training to be held in Santa Fe on Saturday, December 2. If you wish to participate, please call the office 505-884-8441 or check our website at www.lwvnm.org. We will also be sending out the details on the LWVNM Topics List Serve.

Dick Mason

League Day at the Legislature 2007

Save TUESDAY, JANUARY 30, to learn and lobby!

We promise you new ideas and good information to help you lobby most effectively in the next sixty-day legislative session. Your LWVNM Action Committee is arranging for:

- Mary Wilson, LWVUS President, to aid us in our efforts to educate and influence our legislators.
- A location in the Roundhouse (with a table and chairs) where we can inform passersby about the League and our priority issues and where you can meet other Leaguers, exchange information, share tips about contacts, and rest your weary feet.
- A schedule to include: ☛ Orientation to legislative action; ☛ Time in the morning to contact legislators; ☛ Speakers during lunch (a sandwich lunch for a fee); and ☛ Time in the afternoon to attend committee meetings or hearings, visit legislative offices and contact legislators and staff.

Watch for more details in the *La Palabra*, Winter Issue.

The next LWVNM Action Committee meeting will be in Santa Fe on October 13. The location and time will be announced on the LWVNM Topics and Action Committee List Serve Group. If you wish to attend and/or join the committee, contact Dick Mason (polirich@aol.com) or Dee Watkins, 505-823-2308.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW MEXICO

2403 San Mateo Blvd. NE, Suite W-16C
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87110
October 2006

Dear League Member,

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico (LWVNM) invites you to assume a real part of the democratic process and to affect our democracy through education and advocacy.

Education

Through the LWVNM's Education Fund, a 501(c)(3) organization, we seek to educate the public.

- We provide statewide information and liaison to four local Leagues for their preparation of Voters' Guides, which they publish and distribute locally at no cost to recipients.
- In addition, LWVNM prepares and publishes our own Voters Key every two years. In January, we will publish the Voters Key 2007. These are distributed through local Leagues, state meetings and coalitions, sent to all libraries throughout the state, and will be available on our website at www.lwvnm.org.
- In December 2006, LWVNM will sponsor a public educational forum on how to communicate with legislators about citizen concerns.

These efforts are not cheap. League volunteers do all the work for publishing and for sponsoring a forum or workshop. We need your help to finance these projects. Your contribution to the LWVNM Education Fund is tax-deductible.

Advocacy

LWVNM has a long history of advocating for our position issues: Health Care, Education, Water, Campaign Finance and Ethics Reform, Redistricting, Election Reform, Drug Policy, Children and Youth.

- Our advocacy is based on study of the issues, presentation of pro and con arguments, and reaching consensus or concurrence on a position. Only after these steps do we advocate. We never take positions for or against parties or candidates. Only issues.
- Three new state studies were approved at the 2005 Convention: Sustainability, Death Penalty Abolition, and Immigration. You have had written information and local programs during the past year on these topics. We will lobby on each after we arrive at a position. You are invited to join the study groups at any time through your local League.
- Printing and mailing costs for our quarterly state newsletter, *La Palabra*, have gone up.
- Operating and lobbying efforts are also costly. Contributions to these are not tax-deductible, but they are sorely needed. Unlike other organizations, we do not have paid lobbyists.

Our lobbyists are volunteers, and most have borne the expenses associated with their work and their travel to legislative meetings. We are very grateful to them, but being able to pay one's expenses should not be a requirement for being a lobbyist for the League. We would like to be able to reimburse lobbyists for some of their expenses on behalf of the League. Since lobbying and operations expenses are not tax-deductible, it is difficult to obtain outside funding. Therefore, we ask you, the members, for assistance.

Please continue to support your local League and we hope you will join us in making a contribution to the important activities of the state League as well.

Whether your contribution is to the LWVNM (Operating/Activism Fund) or the LWVNM Education Fund (the tax-deductible fund), please state your choice on your check and mail it in the enclosed envelope. We will acknowledge your support as soon as possible before the end of the year.

We thank you for your consideration of our request and extend best wishes for the holiday season.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Morgan

Marilyn Morgan, President

Shelly Shepherd

Shelly Shepherd, Fundraising Chair

LEAGUE ACTIVITIES

Albuquerque/Bernalillo County

Our August Board retreat was the beginning of a process to come up with a written 2-year plan for LWVABC. Goals and objectives were identified. We will continue to work on the plan over the next few months.

We produced a new membership brochure and did some minor revisions of our membership renewal form. A membership form was included in the October *Voter* so that everyone can help to recruit new members.

Mary Wilson, LWVUS President, was the speaker at a well-attended August general meeting. She talked about national projects and her upcoming activities. Eight LWVABC members were recognized as 50-year League members. "Representative Government: What Makes It Work?" was the subject of our September unit meetings. Speakers included Matt Brix, Executive Director of Common Cause of New Mexico, on ethics and lobbying reform, and UNM Professor Lonna Atkeson on the election system. League members led a discussion on various election issues, and Josephine Porter spoke on election reform.

On September 20 the Natural Resources Committee put on a successful forum with the two candidates for Commissioner of Public Lands. Approximately 100 people attended, and both Albuquerque daily newspapers, two radio stations and one television station covered the forum.

A forum on the pros and cons of a proposed Bernalillo County Quality of Life Gross Receipts Tax will be held in October. Speakers from the Quality of Life Initiative and the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce will make presentations.

The *Voters' Guide* will be ready for distribution on October 10. Sixty thousand copies will be placed in libraries and businesses around Bernalillo and Sandoval Counties. *Diane Goldfarb*, President

Greater Las Cruces

Our October Potluck Dinner and Meeting with a Leader was held October 11. Presenters were Kathy Campbell, President of the Los Alamos League, and LWV/GLC members of the study committee, Johnnie Aldrich, Beth Bardwell and Lora Lucero. Kathy Campbell continues on the second year of the sustainability study which is funded by LWVNM. A set of consensus questions related to the two-year study for a potential state League position on sustainability was considered. The consensus questions with some subsidiary discussion questions were published in the summer issue of *La Palabra*. Download pros and cons from <http://www.lwvnm.org/Sustainability/ProCon.pdf>. The basic study guide remains the articles that were published in the four 2005 issues of *La Palabra*. Links to these articles and to the references in the articles can be found at <http://www.lwvnm.org/sustainability.html>.

Membership in the LWV/GLC goes from August to August the following year. During the past July and August almost everyone on our roster renewed membership for 2006-2007, and we have added new members.

Tuesday, October 17, is our district-wide Candidate Forum, which includes all candidates in Doña Ana County. Wednesday, October 25, is the second forum which includes candidates for the federal and state races. November 30 we will present a training session for election observers.

Los Alamos

The LWVLA held the first of two candidate forums on September 21. Seven candidates for four Los Alamos County Council seats answered questions about the planned downtown redevelopment projects, for which the Council has authorized bonding up to \$75M. The projects include the relocation of old County and LAPS warehouse facilities from a site on Trinity Drive to east of the airport and also the reconstruction of the municipal buildings near Ashley. The Trinity site, a total of about 40 acres adjacent to existing downtown development, will be leased for private development, bringing some operating revenue for the public schools. The forum was filmed by PAC-8 and has been shown on the local public access channel.

A second candidate forum for the candidates for all local offices was held on October 4. The *Los Alamos Voters Guide*, with contributions from both LWVNM and LWVLA, was distributed on September 27. The *Voters Guide* and candidate forums have been funded by the proceeds of a successful fund drive during which we received contributions from a number of local businesses.

At the end of August, a unit meeting was held to discuss the second-year questions for the LWVNM sustainability position study. The Los Alamos members agreed that LWVNM should adopt a principle of sustainability that would apply to all of its positions. "Sustainability" must be carefully defined and explained so that the intent remains clear. Education, regulation of development, and a new attitude of corporate responsibility are among the key elements the LWVNM can work to achieve. *Katherine Campbell*, President

Santa Fe County

After a quiet summer, LWV SFC activities began in earnest with our September units and general meeting topic of health care. The subject was covered from local, state, and national perspectives. The communication director from St. Vincent's Regional Medical Center provided information and updates on hospital services. A representative from Santa Fe County informed members about available public services. League members Dick Mason and Charlotte Roybal gave a comprehensive presentation on efforts in other states and New Mexico to bring universal health care to all citizens.

Being short-handed at an administrative level hasn't hampered efforts to register voters and develop a *Voters Guide*, thanks to a great Voter Services Committee. A membership event with Mary Wilson as our special guest is planned for October. Our book club continues to generate interesting discussions. Using the LWV/CA template is providing an easy way to develop a website which will be available in early October. With it we hope to expand communication with our members and the public. *Jane Gaziano*, President

League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces
STUDY REPORT
IMMIGRATION ISSUES RELEVANT TO LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO

September 6, 2006

Marnie Leverett, Chair ❖ Bonnie Burn, Member ❖ Immigration Study Committee

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special appreciation is extended to the law enforcement and government officials who provided data and helped educate us about this important issue:

Steven A. Higgs, Patrol Agent in Charge of the Las Cruces Station
Douglas Mosier, Agent, Public Information Office
Border Patrol, El Paso Sector (Texas and New Mexico)
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

INTRODUCTION

Immigration into the United States has come under scrutiny and will be a political issue in the November, 2006 General Elections. The League of Women Voters at the local, state and national levels takes political action on issues that have been studied, presented to members, and consensus reached by members. Following this practice two studies are underway in the League of Women Voters.

At the state level, the League of Women Voters of New Mexico is undertaking a one-year study of social, economic and political ramifications of current immigration policy and law in New Mexico. The scope of this study includes an examination of attitudes underlying current policy and a discussion of what principles should or might guide it. A committee of members from the local Leagues in New Mexico is researching and educating themselves about the issues relevant to their local areas. Reports from each of the local committees will be submitted to the State League for consideration and further direction.

At the national level, the League of Women Voters of the United States adopted a three-year immigration study at the 2006 League Convention. The first two years will be devoted to study of the issue, and the last year will focus on reaching consensus on positions that will allow the League to take action. A committee of members from across the United States will be brought together in October, 2006, to define the scope of the study and begin work.

Both of these studies have come about because current U.S. policy seems inadequate to handle the number of undocumented individuals coming into the United States. During election years, politicians seem reluctant to initiate any changes in immigration law for fear of alienating their constituencies. A study of current policy would be of great service to our country by identifying the issues and recommending action that would lead to a comprehensive, consistent immigration policy. Neither study has preconceived outcomes, nor does either have the goal of focusing on or discrediting any political candidate or party. Rather, the goal is to determine relevant facts that will lead to consensus positions on which the League may take action.

This report aims to educate about the immigration issues relevant to the League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces, New Mexico. Since this League is the only New Mexico

League to have an international border, the focus is on undocumented immigration and the Border Patrol. Specific information will be discussed about the Border Patrol and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Unit. In so doing, the issues related to undocumented immigration will be intertwined.

BORDER PATROL

History

For a comprehensive report on the history of the Border Patrol, log on to the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) web site, www.cbp.gov, and open the tab on Border Security. Briefly, the Border Patrol was officially established in 1924 when the Labor Appropriation Act of 1924 was passed. The borders, especially along the Texas to California international border, were patrolled (1904) on horseback by "mounted watchmen" whose primary goal was to stop illegal immigration of Chinese who were trying to avoid the Chinese exclusion laws. By 1915, the watchmen were renamed Mounted Inspectors, were sometimes assisted by military troops and the Texas Rangers. By 1952, legislation allowed Border Patrol agents "to board and search conveyances for illegal immigrants anywhere in the United States. For the first time, illegal entrants traveling within the country were subject to arrest." (Source: U.S. Border Patrol History – cbp.gov)

Organization

The operational goals of the Border Patrol are to (1) control the borders, (2) deter entry, and (3) apprehend those who penetrate the border. To meet the goals, (1) manpower and infrastructure must be in place, (2) technology (i.e., computers, cameras, listening devices, drones, etc.), must be available, and (3) agents need a place (or station) from which to work. Other criteria might be adequate detention facilities and federal prosecuting judges to ensure that undocumented immigrants are processed in a timely manner.

The borders are divided into 20 sectors and each sector is divided into stations.

The El Paso Sector contains 12 stations: Alamogordo, Albuquerque, Carlsbad, Deming, Las Cruces, Lordsburg, Santa Teresa and Truth or Consequences in New Mexico and El Paso, Fabens, Ysleta, and Fort Hancock in Texas.

The El Paso Sector boundaries include 266 miles of international border, 125,000 square miles of territory, eight

Border Patrol Stations in New Mexico and four in West Texas. El Paso Sector is the only one that includes river and land boundaries as part of the coverage areas.

The El Paso Section currently has 1,668 agents and includes the two westernmost counties of Texas and the entire state of New Mexico. For homeland security reasons, the number assigned to each station is not specified.

In light of President Bush's recent focus on undocumented immigrants, National Guardsmen have been ordered to supplement the current Border Patrol agents. There are approximately 700 National Guard personnel assigned to the El Paso Sector that function in the following areas: support logistical and administrative activities, operate camera surveillance equipment, and provide support in communications and intelligence activities, garage and building maintenance, installation of border security infrastructure, and tending horses for the Horse Patrol Unit in Fabens, Texas.

Again, as part of a presidential mandate that will bring more Border Patrol agents to our nation's borders, the Border Patrol is in a hiring "blitz" with plans to hire as many as 6,000 new agents by 2008. Typically, there is not a shortage of applicants during these hiring periods; however, only one of 23 applicants will go on to become an agent after he or she completes a rigorous 19-week Border Patrol Academy. This speaks to the standards of professionalism that is required to become a Border Patrol agent.

The function of recruiting new agents is handled in the El Paso Sector headquarters located in El Paso. Applications may be submitted in person or by completing an Internet online Employment Application (www.usajob.gov). Agents are recruited from a variety of sources (e.g., former military, recruitment fairs, etc.).

All recruits must submit to a security check and attend a 19-week course at the Border Patrol Academy located in Artesia, NM. Recruited agents may come in at the GSA levels of 5 to 7, depending on education and qualifications. An example of salary is the GSA-5 ranking that ranges from Step 1 - \$34,966 to Step 10 - \$43,472. Because Border Patrol is a law enforcement organization, agents work when the law breakers work, which is mainly at night. A night differential is paid for this work. Administratively uncontrolled overtime (AUO) is also paid that covers shift changes and alien processing. AUO is almost always paid at the rate of 25% of base pay. There are other ramifications that affect pay such as cost of living adjustments for locality. Promotion is usually rapid during the first year, and pay step increases occur at one year intervals until the middle step. Health insurance and family leave, vacations, and sick leave are also part of the benefits package. (Source: Website: <http://honorfirst.com/pay.htm>)

Because of the training agents receive, the accident rate among them is low. Border Patrol agents learn how to take care of and protect themselves. They also learn to perform their jobs in extreme temperatures and extreme situations.

Daily Operations

In daily operations headquarters and stations within the El Paso Sector are in constant contact. The Border Patrol also enjoys a good local working relationship with counterparts in Mexico due largely to the efforts of the Border Patrol Mexican

Liaison Unit (MLU). Dialogue between MLU and El Paso deals primarily with border safety issues and international crime. Each day the MLU makes contact with municipal, state and federal law enforcement authorities in Juarez, Mexico, to discuss a wide range of issues of mutual international concern.

The Border Patrol does not do "sweeps" of employment sites to determine immigration status of employees. Work site enforcement is the responsibility of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

The U.S. public hears news reports of terrorists crossing the borders. El Paso Sector is not aware of the apprehension of any terrorists in this area; however, there have been arrests of migrants from countries of "special interest." Keep in mind that a thorough biometric screening is done on every migrant caught on the U.S. borders to prevent terrorists and instruments of terror from entering the United States. Biometric screening involves the identification of persons in custody via an automated 10-print fingerprinting and photo recognition system that is instantly routed through a national FBI crime data base. The formal name of this 10-print system is Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS). Agents have a tremendous tool for identifying criminals and wanted fugitives across the nation.

BORDER PATROL IN LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO

Las Cruces does not have international border responsibility. The boundary responsibility includes the City of Las Cruces, most of Doña Ana County, except for Santa Teresa, three highway checkpoints at I-25, I-10, and highway 285, an extension of Valley Drive. On I-10, the boundary stretches into Luna County to just east of the Florida Mountains and a stretch along the southern area of I-10. The boundary on I-25 continues north of Hatch to include the town of Salem. On highway 70, the Las Cruces station ends at the Doña Ana County line.

The Station is headed by a Patrol Agent in Charge, Steven Higgs. The Las Cruces Station is part of the El Paso Sector, with headquarters in El Paso. Public relations and statistical information is provided by the Public Relations Office in El Paso.

Las Cruces Station has about 144 agents. They are deployed in teams who cover the check-points and patrol 24 hours per day, seven days a week.

Although the Las Cruces station does not have international border responsibility, it does pursue the operational goals of controlling the borders, deterring entry and apprehending those who penetrate the border. Manning checkpoints within the boundary of its area is an important function. A further objective is control of narcotics and other illegal contraband. Although not done routinely, Border Patrol agents also assist in local emergencies and traffic accidents when the opportunity presents itself in their patrolling areas.

STATE OF THE UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT

Demographics

The number of apprehensions of undocumented migrants in the El Paso Sector (Mexico/New Mexico and Mexico/Texas

border near El Paso) is 116,340 for fiscal year (FY) 2006, which represents a five percent increase over the same time period in 2005. In FY 2006, the Deming Station in Luna County, New Mexico, has the highest number of apprehensions in the Sector. In addition, Border Patrol agents in the El Paso Sector seized \$146 million in narcotics throughout New Mexico and West Texas in FY 2006.

Approximately 95 percent of undocumented immigrant apprehensions in the El Paso Sector are Mexican. The vast majority of those are voluntarily removed to Mexico (assuming they have no criminal records that would prompt Customs and Border Protection [CBP] to pursue prosecution and/or jail time in the U.S. prior to their removal). In regard to the five percent of migrants apprehended from countries other than Mexico, the majority are from Central and South American countries (i.e., Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Brazil).

Those migrants who are apprehended from countries other than Mexico are detained at federal detention facilities until such time that they can be returned to their native countries upon order from an Immigration Judge. That administrative detention and removal process is the responsibility of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

The general health status of those crossing is good when apprehended by Border Patrol agents in the El Paso Sector. There have been instances where migrants are located in physical and/or emotional distress particularly when they are victims of international smuggling organizations. These unscrupulous organizations exploit the plights of unsuspecting migrants and place them in dangerous situations. This exploitation has increased as borders become more secure due to increasing numbers of Border Patrol agents, technology and infrastructure.

There have been 34 deaths of migrants in the El Paso Sector between January and August, 2006, while 484 distressed migrants have been rescued in desert areas, waterways, confined spaces, and the like. In FY 2005, there were a total of 31 deaths and 490 total rescues of migrants in distress.

Although the Border Patrol does not track the number of women and children migrants, the agents do encounter family members as parts of groups that are apprehended in the El Paso

Sector. The ages of migrants encountered will range from infants to the elderly. Single women who are periodically apprehended crossing into the U.S. illegally are segregated in detention facilities from the other population.

Apprehension

Each station and checkpoint manages a number of administrative functions, has detention facilities, and has access to a federal prosecutor because border protection and immigration are functions of the federal government.

When there is an apprehension, an extensive check of family background and citizenship occurs. This situation is handled with extreme sensitivity because an individual may be a U.S. citizen or have a criminal record. After the background and citizenship check is completed, the individual's fingerprints and photo are sent through the FBI's Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS) for identification and to determine any past history of problems or criminal records. This is an important tool for the agents. For FY 2006 (January 1-August 17), a total of 136,271 criminal aliens were documented by the Border Patrol agents using IAFIS. El Paso Sector accounts for approximately 10 percent of those high-profile apprehensions that include major crimes such as murder, assault and high-profile sexual crimes. Once the IAFIS part of the process is resolved, the individual is turned over to the appropriate authority. If the individual has a criminal record, then he or she is turned over to federal authorities. If the individual does not have a criminal record, he or she can volunteer to return to Mexico if he or she waives his or her right to a hearing before a federal prosecutor. If deportation is the final outcome, an administrative court decision is made. If criminal records are involved, the individual will be prosecuted under federal law. During this process, any identified criminal aliens are segregated in detention from other detained populations.

In criminal cases, after the prisoner has served his or her term, a deportation hearing is held. After adjudication, the individual is returned to the home country at U.S. expense, or, if the prisoner is a U.S. citizen, he or she is released to the community. ■

Submitted by Rebecca Frenkel, LWVNM Immigration Study Chair

States Improve Pain Policies

A recent report from the University of Wisconsin Pain and Policy Studies Group (PPSG) indicates progress at the state level to enact policies so that healthcare professionals can effectively lessen suffering of their patients. Aaron Gilson, associate director of US policy research for this organization, indicates two ways this has happened:

“...repeal of restrictive or ambiguous policy language that has prevented healthcare professionals from aggressively treating pain” and

“... adopting language to encourage pain management, palliative care, and end-of-life care.”

The report also indicates that 19 states improved their grades from 2003 and 82 percent of the states have a grade

above “C”, up from 49 percent in 2000, and 67 percent in 2003.

New Mexico has a grade of B+ , the same as in 2003. Only Michigan and Virginia received an “A” in 2003. No state's grade decreased from 2000 to 2006. However, there are still barriers to be removed.

The article “Four Barriers To Pain Management and Where Are We Now?” appeared in the LWVABC *Voter*, October, 2006. LWV/ABC November Units will discuss the complex problem of addiction – definitions, confusions and beliefs. You are invited to attend these units. For dates, locations, and times, or more information, contact. *Dee Watkins*, Chair, Drug Policy Study Committee 505-823-2308.

It Is Time for Health Care for All New Mexicans

According to a report prepared by the New Mexico legislature, New Mexico ranks second in the nation for the rate of uninsuredness, and first for children without insurance.

At a press conference on July 20, Governor Bill Richardson announced a five-point plan to address this alarming statistic. The first four of the five parts are incremental and can be carried out within the existing system. They are necessary to try to cover as many people as possible, but they won't address the systemic problem. As Governor Richardson stated at the press conference, "We've been doing things incrementally, but now we need a comprehensive plan." To address this need, the Governor has worked out an arrangement with the Legislature to create the Health Coverage for New Mexicans Committee (HCNMC) to develop a comprehensive health cost containment and financing plan to cover all New Mexicans. The committee will hire a consultant to study various models of achieving health care coverage for all New Mexicans. Governor Richardson stated, "I want every New Mexican insured by 2008-2009."

The committee is charged with submitting a recommendation to the Legislature for the 2008 session. The three meetings of the HCNMC have been productive and the models

to be studied will be chosen at their meeting on October 19 in Santa Fe.

The LWVNM belongs to two coalitions that have been instrumental in the creation of the HCNMC: Health Care for All New Mexicans and Health Security for New Mexicans. The Health Care for All New Mexicans advocated for the study of various models of achieving universal health care in New Mexico. The Health Security for New Mexicans have a specific plan to achieve universal health care in New Mexico and we expect that some version of their plan will be one of the models studied.

To be effective, the HCNMC should only look at models that achieve the following five objectives:

- Cover all New Mexicans;
- Contain costs;
- Improve the quality of health care;
- Are equitably financed; and
- Simplify administration.

For information on the progress of the HCNMC check their website at <http://insurenw.mexico.state.nm.us/HCNMC.html>.

New Mexico has the opportunity to lead the nation in instituting a plan that will cover every resident of the state.

Dick Mason