



La Palabra

The newsletter of the League of Women Voters of New Mexico

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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

Celebrate League - 90 Years February 14, 1920 - 2009



Suffragists with Flags,

Congress in special sessions in May and June of 1919 and was sent to the states for ratification. Tennessee became the 38th state to ratify the amendment on August 20, 1920, and it was certified for adoption by the Secretary of State on August 26, 1920.

Also in 1919, Carrie Chapman Catt put forth the idea for a League of Women Voters at the annual convention of the National American Women Suffrage Association. The League was formally organized on February 14, 1920, in order to help the millions of new voters become informed participants in government.



Here in New Mexico, October 2009 marks the 60th anniversary of the organization of the League in our state. By October of 1949, local Leagues already existed in Albuquerque, Los Alamos and Las Vegas. During the past 60 years there have been about a dozen local and "provisional" Leagues in New Mexico. Reflecting national trends of membership decline, however, it has been difficult to keep

(Continued on page 2)

LWVNM Turns 60 This Month!

But we're nowhere near retirement age! So, please consider making a donation to the LWVNM Education Fund using the form on p. 9 of this issue. The Education Fund pays for LWVNM voter services, including the statewide *Voters Key*, outside the areas covered by the four local Leagues, all of which lie along the Rio Grande in the central part of the state.

Celebrate League! *(Continued from page 1)*

these going outside the main population centers of the state in the central Rio Grande corridor. The state League, through its *Voters Key* and web site, currently does what it can to provide services to the remainder of the state.

As issues from climate change to the SunCal TIDD rage around us, is the League still relevant? In an age where orchestrated misinformation dominates debates on national issues, the answer must be a resounding YES! The League is respected for its voter services, especially its *Voters Guides*. It provides well-moderated forums that allow issues to be debated and candidates to present their views. Other more narrowly based organizations advocate, perhaps more effectively than the League, for individual issues, including many that are important to us. But the League consistently promotes responsible and responsive government at all levels and values the general welfare and common good. Without these, progress on other issues that we care about is unlikely.

Representative Chasey and Senator Ingle will present a resolution commemorating these League anniversaries and recognizing League contributions to New Mexico. We hope you will be able to join us for the celebrations on January 25-26 in Santa Fe.

In this issue, we invite you to make a donation to the League of Women Voters of New Mexico. The state League avoids soliciting business and other non-member contributors in order not to interfere with local League fundraising, but this means that we must rely on our members, especially for our Education Fund and statewide *Voters Key*.

Thank you

**An anniversary is a time to celebrate
the joys of today,
the memories of yesterday, and
the hopes of tomorrow**

CEDAW - *Kathy Campbell*

Almost every country in the world (186, to be exact) has signed on to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Convention is the most comprehensive document prepared by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. It was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1979 and came into force upon being signed by 20 countries in 1981.

The list of states that have not ratified or acceded to the treaty is short: Iran, Sudan, Somalia, the Holy See, three Pacific island states, and . . . the United States of America. "Say Again?"

The Convention provides a fundamental framework for ending violence against women, ensuring girls access to education, and promoting economic opportunity and political participation for women. It obliges its signatories to take measures against traffic in women and exploitation of women. In short, it is a basic human rights treaty. But apparently some in Congress feel that a treaty that affirms the reproductive rights of women and recognizes that culture and tradition are influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations is something they want no part of.

While the U.S. has signed the Convention, the Senate has never ratified it. This could change in the current Congress. Please take time to urge Senators Bingaman and Udall to bring this important issue to the floor of the United States Senate.

For more information, including the full text of the Convention, see www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/.



Suffragists demonstrate for the vote

Climate Change Symposium - Kathy Campbell

Together with our partners, the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club and Oxfam America, the League of Women Voters of New Mexico put on a successful forum on climate change on August 21 at the University of New Mexico (UNM) in Albuquerque. The conference was introduced by LWVUS president Mary Wilson, Roger Schluntz, the dean of the School of Architecture and Planning where the event was held, and Michael Casaus of the Sierra Club. The plenary session in the afternoon highlighted architect Ed Mazria followed by several members of our Congressional delegation. In between there were three sessions of parallel presentations on everything from the economic costs of climate change (“pay now or pay later” was the message of UNM economics professor Janie Chermak) to urban planning to environmental justice to green jobs. The biggest problem of this smoothly-run day was deciding which sessions to attend!

Everyone assembled at 2 p.m. to hear Ed Mazria’s talk. Mazria is an internationally known architect who lives in Santa Fe. He is the founder of Architecture 2030 (see www.architecture2030.org), an organization which advocates an immediate 50% reduction in the fossil fuel requirements for all new construction and major renovations, decreasing to 0% (i.e., carbon neutrality) by 2030. The 2030 Challenge has been widely adopted by mainstream organizations such as the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the American Institute of

Architects as well as the U.S. Green Building Council and others. Mazria used part of his time to describe a ‘housing mortgage interest rate buy-down’ for homes that meet or exceed the initial energy reduction target of the 2030 Challenge. He estimated that an annual investment of \$30 billion in reducing the interest on qualifying mortgages by 2% would generate almost \$300 billion in private construction, 4.5 million jobs in the hard-hit construction industry, \$20 billion in state and local tax revenue, and \$60 billion in federal tax revenue--this last a 100% return on investment.



In the final session, Senator Bingaman spoke to the audience through a pre-recorded video, followed by Sarah Cobb, Senator Udall’s field representative, and Congressmen Heinrich and Lujan. These three then participated in a lively question-and-answer session.

If you missed this event, several of the presentations are now available through our web site. Follow the links at www.lwvnm.org. In particular, don’t miss Ken Hughes’ presentation, in which he shares a marvellous collection of photographs from around the globe in a talk entitled “Mitigating Climate Change: The Role of Planning.”

Thanks to the LWVUS for offering us the grant that got this effort started, and muchas, muchas gracias to LWVNM Natural Resources chair Lora Lucero for picking up that ball and running with it!

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS - Kathy Campbell

The July 2009 LWVNM board meeting was conducted electronically using a listserv set up for that purpose. The board adopted a procedure for dealing with resolutions at state conventions, and accepted further editorial changes to the bylaws as revised after the 2009 convention. We agreed with the proposal of the Action Committee to celebrate the League’s 90th birthday in conjunction with League Day, January 26, 2010. Plans for the August 21 forum on Climate Change in New Mexico were approved.

(Continued on page 4)

Action Committee Report – Dick Mason, Chair

The LWVNM Action Committee has been meeting regularly since late spring. Its activities have included: monitoring the activities of New Mexico Legislative Interim Committees; planning for the 2010 League Day at the Legislature, celebrating the 90th Birthday of the LWVUS; and lobbying for strong climate change and health care reform legislation on the federal level. In addition, the Action Committee has been taking part in the Better Choices Campaign that the LWVNM joined in September.

Members of the Action Committee attended and, in some cases, testified at the Legislative Interim Committee meetings of the Legislative Finance Committee; Legislative Health and Human Services Committee; Courts, Corrections and Justice Committee; Water & Natural Resources Committee; and the Legislative Education Study Committee. Our issues for advocacy included maximizing health insurance coverage for New Mexicans through the Medicaid, CHIPRA, and State Coverage Insurance (SCI) programs. I met briefly with Governor Richardson during his Office Hours and presented a statement about continuing health care coverage and enhancing revenue sources and cost reduction of the state as a way of meeting the fiscal crises.

The 2010 League Day at the Legislature is scheduled for January 26, 2010. Representative Chasey and Senator Ingle will be submitting a resolution recognizing the LWVUS's 90th birthday. It should be voted on that day. We are tentatively

planning a **legislators' reception on the evening of January 25th in celebration of the 90th birthday. Save both the dates.**

The Action Committee has lobbied on the federal climate change legislation that passed the House and continues to lobby for a strong public option in the federal health care bill. Thanks to all of you who have made calls to our congressmen.

The LWVNM is excited about joining the Better Choices for New Mexico (BCNM) campaign. This coalition, one of many similar ones formed throughout the country, urges governments to look at increasing revenues, as well as cost reductions, as a way of addressing budget shortages. The LWVNM position on state finances states that taxes must be "adequate to finance the essentials of government". Other positions of the LWVNM state that health, human and education services are essential. The Legislature and the Governor are looking at cutting essential programs to deal with the budget shortfall. The State of New Mexico was headed for a financial crisis as soon as they passed the tax cuts in 2003 and the shortfall will last at least through fiscal year 2014. This could be devastating for social services and education in New Mexico. BCNM brings together over thirty advocacy, labor and provider groups to advocate for new revenue sources for New Mexico. You can find out more at their web site: <http://betterchoicesnewmexico.com>.

Board Meeting Highlights *(Continued from page 3)*

The board met again on September 12 in Albuquerque. We decided to join the Better Choices Campaign, a coalition of organizations that believe that the Legislature should be looking at revenue increases as well as spending cuts in balancing the state budget (www.betterchoicesnewmexico.com). Most of the meeting was devoted to updating our strategic plan. The following 2009-10 goals were identified: (1) to empower the public to participate in government with the objectives of being a key leader in the election process, protecting voters' rights, and reducing the influence of private money in New Mexico elections and government; (2) to assist local Leagues and members at large in education, advocacy, action, and studies with the objectives of providing support and consultation to local Leagues as needed or requested; and (3) to increase League visibility in New Mexico with the objectives of increasing membership and increasing outreach and communication with legislators, government officials, media, general public, national allies, and potential members.

Fair Representation Update: *Partnering with Census 2010* - Cheryl Haaker, Chair



The Fair Representation study group is currently focusing on the 2010 Census; its information will be critical for redistricting in 2011. The League has been asked to encourage New Mexicans to provide the

accurate data needed. Local Leagues across the country are being encouraged to become census partners. LWVUS held a conference call on September 9th with representatives from the Census Bureau to determine the help they needed and what Leagues could do. The League of Women Voters is a trusted voice in the community, and our backing is expected to greatly help get the word out.

Recently, the study group met with Robert Lucero of the Denver Regional Census Center for more details of what is needed in New Mexico. He told us that our state has historically been among the least-counted states. This adversely affects the number of Congressional representatives the state is allocated and reduces New Mexico's slice of the "federal pie"—funds for health services, education, research, veterans support, employment, and conservation. Redistricting will be needed at state, county and local levels as well as federal.

The brutal murder of a census worker in Kentucky points out how important it is to make sure that New Mexicans have the facts about the importance of the census to counteract the wacko conspiracy theories that have begun circulating recently (see Census Q&A).

At this time, the Las Cruces, Santa Fe, and Central New Mexico Leagues have signed on as census partners. Some of the things the Leagues will be doing may include:

- Attending or becoming part of Complete Count Committees in their areas
- Members/officers reading public service announcements on TV and radio for the census in the name of the League
- Adding census information to League websites

- Requesting volunteers to help serve at Questionnaire Assistance Centers (the Census Bureau will provide the training)
- Including articles about the census in our newsletters (look for the "hands" logo!)
- Writing letters to editors to promote the census and to counter fake facts
- Bringing up the census at each unit meeting and reminding family and friends to complete census information to the best of their ability
- Distributing census flyers, which can be personalized with the League's name and logo.

Census Q & A



IT'S IN OUR HANDS

Q: Is it true that the 2010 census is going to be used to identify conservative white Americans, so they can be shipped off to internment camps in Alaska?

A: No. First, personal information collected by the census is protected by law, with severe penalties for disclosure. Second, the census aggregates data to ensure that it is not possible to single out individuals. Third, 2010 Census questions do NOT include political affiliation.

Q: Will League members be employed and paid as census takers?

A: League members may apply for such duties as citizens of the United States, but not as members of the League. See www.census.gov for more information.

Census

The term comes from Latin. During the Roman Empire, the census served to count the number of citizens and to assess the potential military strength and future tax revenue. It transformed the cities into political and military communities.

www.roman-empire.net

The LWVNM Water Study Is Coming to a Unit Meeting Near You!

Barbara Calef, Director

The water study is entering its final stage. The League is developing a statewide position on the allocation of water among competing uses grounded in a basic understanding of water availability and water law in New Mexico. Four questions are being presented for discussion in the local consensus meetings that will be held in the fall and winter of 2009-2010:

1. What elements of "public welfare" are most important?
2. What should be the role of regional water planning?
3. How should land use be tied to water availability?
4. Why conserve water?

(More information about each of these questions was presented in the Summer 2009 issue of *La Palabra*, p. 7.)

Additionally, the water study committee has completed four background papers to assist League members in considering the consensus questions. It will be helpful to have read the questions and background material in advance. The packet is posted on the LWVNM website (www.lwvnm.org) under Water Study Downloads.

During the next few months committee members will visit all of the units in New Mexico to lead discussion of the consensus questions. The local unit meetings are scheduled for:

LWV Los Alamos	October 1, 2009
LWV of Santa Fe County	October 21, 2009
LWV of Central New Mexico	November 10, 12, 16 and 18, 2009
LWV of Greater Las Cruces	January 11, 2010

A recorder will be assigned to compile the consensus results for each meeting. Based on these results, a proposed position will be compiled and presented for consideration by the State Board in March 2010.

REMEMBER to download the study materials (a one-page background paper and a checklist for each question) before your unit meeting from www.lwvnm.org under Water Study Downloads.

Climate Change and Western Water Supply

The Southwest is already seeing a larger "climate signal" than other parts of the country: an average increase of 1.5°F in the second half of the 20th century, and up to 4°F in winter temperatures at high elevations. In terms of water supply, global warming will have major and mutually reinforcing impacts on an already water-stressed region.

- Earlier snowmelt and shifts from snow to rain at middle elevations will decrease the snow storage capacity that has for centuries fed southwest agriculture during the critical early summer months.
- Average precipitation will decrease, with serious implications for the viability of interstate compacts such as the Colorado River Compact and the Rio Grande Compact.
- Reduced streamflows will exacerbate the direct effects of increased temperatures on agriculture by increasing the salinity and concentration of pollutants in the water.
- Increased temperatures will lead to increased evapotranspiration, reducing total streamflow and reservoirs even faster. Severe drought will become the norm.
- As soil moisture decreases and wild fires increase, soils and vegetation will be less able to store water and more rapid runoff will cause erosion and silting.
- Reduced snowpack and greater extremes in precipitation will challenge existing engineered flood control mechanisms, water storage capacity and streamflow control.

Local League News from the Presidents

Central New Mexico - *Jan and Olin Bray*

LWVCNM held two membership parties. We have put out a Voters' Guide for the Albuquerque municipal election on October 6. Thanks to Andrea Targhetta and Jo Porter who did a great job of editing. We have moderated numerous forums. Gayle Prinkey organized and scheduled moderators and time keepers. We testified at City Council meetings, and the Council thanked us for the *Voters' Guide*. At the Los Alamos Senior Center, our Drug Policy Study Committee presented a skit about how to communicate with health care providers about pain to two full houses. Members also staffed a table and presented a workshop on patients' responsibilities in pain management at the State Conference on Aging. Our Advocacy Committee is exploring Sandoval County issues, and we have begun to explore how to help the Census Partnership. Gayle Prinkey, our Voters' Service Chair, organized a table at the state fair from which *Voters' Guides* were distributed and voter registration forms were completed. Our October units will be about state and local budgeting and finance.

Greater Las Cruces - *Bonnie Burn*

The days of August were not lazy in Las Cruces. Three issues were the focus of our attention:

1. 2010 Decennial Census: Our lunch speaker, Elizabeth Furu Nocello, Field Representative for the U.S. Census, spoke about preparations for and conduct of the census.
2. Health Care Reform: A so-called Nonpartisan Citizens' Forum was a presentation full of misrepresentations about HR 3200, America's Affordable Health Choice Act of 2009. Congressman Teague held a Community Forum that filled the County Commission Chambers and gave him an opportunity to listen to the issues and concerns of his constituents about the issue. It was orderly. Soon afterward, Vicki Simons and I met with one of his staff, each time supporting the public plan. AARP invited the League to attend its meeting in Las Cruces where Senator Bingaman was the keynote speaker on health care. Vicki Simons and I attended a forum

sponsored by the Health Care Consortium that featured Melanie Goodman, staff, who presented Senator Bingaman's position. On September 7, a number of League members attended the rally sponsored across the country by MoveOn. Thank you to the members of the League who attended these events.

3. Climate Change: Three members attended the symposium in Albuquerque on August 21. It was an interesting, educational event, and added to our knowledge about this issue. August 31 and September 1, Congressman Teague sponsored a conference, Re-energizing America, that focused on renewable energy. Secretary of Energy Steven Chu was a keynote speaker. League was well represented. This conference added to the knowledge acquired at the Energy Policy Committee Conference in Hobbs, NM, in April.

Several of us attended a presentation about proposed legislation to designate several major areas of Doña Ana County as Wilderness or National Conservancy areas. Senators Bingaman and Udall are sponsoring SB 1689, The Organ Mountains - Desert Peaks Wilderness Act. GLC convened a public meeting on this issue 12 years ago, and is actively supporting this legislation.

Los Alamos - *Barbara Calef*

The Los Alamos League has heard from several interesting speakers recently. Mike Wheeler, the chairman of our County Council, met with us in August at Lunch with a Leader to discuss the County's options regarding the Trinity Site. The 43-acre site on the edge of our downtown is currently occupied by Quonset huts and office buildings that are in poor condition and slated for demolition during the next year. More than two years ago the county agreed to hire the Boyer Company to re-develop the site with housing and retail. However, the contract remains unsigned and the developer's original plan has altered significantly. Wheeler listed the Council's options to League members and asked for their input. There was no consensus. Subsequently the

Council voted to look for another developer or partner to assist in the project.

At the September Lunch with a Leader, Regina Wheeler, our Environmental Services Manager, spoke about her on-going efforts to implement the Renewable Energy Financing District Act in Los Alamos. The county will need to set up a renewable energy finance district and issue bonds to provide financing. Homeowners and businesses will borrow from the district and the cost will be repaid through the property tax bill. The assessment will stay with the house when the house is sold. Current federal and state tax credits pay 40% of the cost of a new solar system. Net metering will make the economics of the project still more appealing.

Los Alamos County is also hoping to participate in the New Mexico Green Grid Initiative, a demonstration project using federal economic stimulus money for smart grid development. The goal of the project is to reduce peak power use by 25 percent; increase energy efficiency by 6 percent; and deliver 25 percent of electricity from renewable energy by 2020. If the state receives the funding, Los Alamos is slated to be one of five projects in New Mexico.

Dr. Emile Nakhleh, former director of the CIA Political Islam Strategic Analysis Program, spoke at our membership meeting about the issues poisoning America's relations with the international Muslim community and how the Obama Administration, following his advice, is changing course. Stating that America is not at war with Islam and acknowledging that most Muslims do not support violence are among the principles crucial to improved relations. A commitment to work with the indigenous communities to resolve conflict is an essential new policy. Because those communities do not always share our goals, engagement is necessary, but success is not guaranteed.

Santa Fe County - Meredith Machen

The Health Care Forum held August 26 was a very successful educational opportunity. More of a panel discussion than a forum, the health policy experts and representatives for our Congressional delegation shared in-depth perspectives on the issues. Organizers found it more fruitful to have experts share information than field audience

questions which might mislead. The only disruptions were good ones. One shout-out came from a spokesperson who said that the single-payer option should not be ignored; another comment came from a Swiss woman who stated that the U.S. health care system was woefully inadequate compared to Europe's. Participants learned much about the hows and whys of the public option and our complicated political processes and health care system.

The Immigration Forum scheduled for later this month has been postponed until later in the fall or early in winter since Congress has not been able to tackle the issue.

LWVSFC continues to work on developing new partnerships and strengthening relations with other like-minded groups. Partners include the Santa Fe Council on International Relations (CIR), AAUW, Somos Un Pueblo Unido, NM Voices for Children, NAACP, Health Action NM, Sierra Club, and more.

In talking to delegations from other countries, we are increasingly aware of the important role the League plays in developing public policy positions and convening groups and individuals who work to increase an understanding and appreciation for grassroots organizations that ensure government accountability and responsiveness. The League's deliberative processes and advocacy work at the national, state, and local level, are so needed in promoting democracy.

As we work to recruit new members, we need to promote the concept that League was chosen to the U.S. State Department because it is the most trusted non-governmental organization in the United States and because it promotes opportunities for individuals to express their views in inclusive dialogues and public forums.

It is increasingly obvious that systems thinking is important for our constituents because it gives us the concepts and tools we need for understanding powerful structures that underlie complex situations. The League's positions and studies help people move from seeing parts to seeing wholes; from seeing linear cause-effect to seeing interrelationships; from seeing static situations to seeing processes of change.

League Members Propose LWVUS Study Issues - *Carolie Mullan, LWVUS Liaison*

In League parlance, Program includes governmental issues chosen by members for study and action through the Program Planning process - an essential part of the League's mission. This member-driven process differentiates the League from other groups and is how we remain a grassroots organization.

Local Leagues participate in Program Planning at all three levels of the League - local, state and national. For instance, members hold yearly Program Planning meetings to suggest study topics for their local Leagues, suggestions that are screened by local League boards and voted on by members at annual League meetings.

Additionally, local Leagues hold Program Planning meetings every two years to propose study topics at the state and national levels of the organization. These meetings are held in the years prior to the state and national conventions, respectively. For Program Planning at the state and national levels, their boards screen members' suggestions and make recommendations to delegates at state and national conventions.

The Program Planning process is an important League tool for identifying issues for national study, and March 1, 2010, is the deadline for local Leagues to submit Program Planning suggestions for LWVUS consideration. Members participate in the process by attending their local League's Program Planning meeting or, in some cases, by submitting suggestions by mail or online.

Members evaluate possible issues by asking questions such as:

- is there widespread member interest?
- is this a timely issue?
- is government action the most effective way to address the problem?
- is LWVUS the most appropriate level of the League to address the issue?

In addition, members with issue interests are welcome to join the LWVUS Convention Preparation discussion list, where members are discussing and/or promoting issues and the Program Planning process. Instructions are on the LWVUS web site at www.lwv.org.

IT'S OUR 60TH — HAPPY BIRTHDAY LWVNM!
Celebrate by making a donation!

Please accept the enclosed donation to the

____ LWV Education Fund (tax deductible)

Amount enclosed: _____

____ LWVNM (not tax deductible)

Amount enclosed: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Please mail this form with your check made out to one of the two entities listed above to:

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LWVNM BOARD CALENDAR - 2009-2010

- November 14** Board Meeting, Socorro
12:30 - 5:30 p.m. - Skeen Library
New Mexico Tech
- January 9, 2010** Board Meeting, Albuquerque
10 a.m.-3 p.m.
- January 26** League Day at the Legislature
- February 14** LWV 90th Birthday
- March 13** Board Meeting, Socorro
12:30 - 5:30 p.m. - Skeen Library
New Mexico Technology University
- May 15** LWVNM Council - Santa Fe
- May 15** Board Meeting after Council

**In Memory of
Margaret Yenchius Prince
1923-2009**

Meg, a long-time League member, passed away on September 30. She lived a full life dedicated to service, to knowledge, and to making the world a more fair and honest place to live. Throughout her life she was interested in politics and how governments functions. She was a member of the local Leagues in Los Alamos and then Central New Mexico (Albuquerque). Although she served on many committees in the League, her expertise as a parliamentarian was widely used in both Leagues. Through her long-term membership in the New Mexico Association of Parliamentarians, she practiced due process and kept discussions civil and productive. A memorial service will be held on Saturday, October 24, 3:00 p.m. at the First Unitarian Church, 3701 Carlisle Blvd., N.E., Albuquerque. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Unitarian Church or the Peace and Justice Center.