**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW MEXICO**

**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**JANUARY 15, 2022**

**VIA ZOOM**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

Hannah Burling, President

Kathy Brook, First Vice President/LWVSNM Co-President/ Program

Barbara Calef, Second Vice President and LWVLA Co-President

Dick Mason, Action Chair

Rebecca Chaiken, Secretary

Suzanne Ronneau, Treasurer

Judy Williams, Past President/Voter Services

Meredith Machen, Education/Immigration/Special Projects

Akkana Peck, Webmaster

Karen Douglas, LWVCNM Co-President and Spent Nuclear Fuel

Donna Sandoval, LWVCNM Co-President

Eileen VanWie, LWVSNM Co-President

Becky Shankland, LWVLA Co-President

Susan Haase, Membership and Events

Renny Ashleman, Voting and Elections

Bobbi Riedel, Women's Issues

Jody Larson, Archivist

**CALL TO ORDER and INTRODUCTIONS**

Hannah called the meeting to order at 11:01 a.m. All members introduced themselves and explained their position with the LWVNM.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA and APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Hannah added two items to the agenda. Renny moved that the amended agenda be approved, and Kathy seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

Kathy moved to amend the third paragraph of the November 20, 2021, minutes under Action and this was seconded by Renny. All voted in favor. Kathy then moved to approve the amended November 20, 2021, board meeting minutes and Susan seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Hannah participated in a call with LWVUS during which she learned that the new LWVUS website is scheduled to be launched during the week of January 24, 2022. The updated website is expected to be stronger with a new home page design that better highlights our focus areas, an enhanced search engine, a modernized design across the site, and custom action to-do lists to empower users to get involved. There will also be a new donation option. A few other changes to the website, including a legal center with detailed information on legal cases; a new design for the League management site; and accessibility upgrades; are expected later in 2022.

Threats to voting were discussed during another call with LWVUS. This was thoroughly dispiriting and will be discussed more by Renny later in the meeting.

Hannah and Kathy have been discussing ways to improve the experience of new board members. She said we can look forward to this change in the future and new board members will have an easier transition.

Regarding the new donation option Hannah described, Becky asked if it will be clear where individuals are donating their money. Hannah responded that the donation button on the LWVUS site will be for LWVUS. Barbara said that at Convention we were assured that individuals will not be joining at the national level. She added that it needs to be clear that contributions are donations, not for membership. Hannah agreed to look at this issue when it is launched.

Hannah also mentioned that the LWVUS Convention is expected to occur at the end of June and will likely be in Denver, Colorado.

**TREASURER'S REPORT**

Suzanne presented the Treasurer's Report showing an ending balance of $31,817.49. Suzanne sent out the PMP invoices and has received payments from three of the local Leagues. She is waiting for payment from SNM. She also received the $5,000 invoice for Vote411, and she made the payment with funds from the Thornburg Foundation grant.

Judy asked why there was still so much money left under the Thornburg grant. Dick said that Kathleen Burke is slow to send in her timesheets. Suzanne confirmed that the last timesheet Kathleen submitted was for September 2021.

Meredith asked for an update on the 501(c)(3) status and asked what the plan was to start soliciting donations. Hannah responded that there could be a wait of up to 12 months because of delays with the IRS. In the meantime, she will informally inquire about possible grants.

Hannah added that she and Suzanne have not been able to coordinate their schedules to get to the bank for the Education Fund. The Education Fund board, which is now made up of Hannah (president), Suzanne (treasurer), Jody (director), Karen Wentworth (director), Kim Sorenson (secretary), and Rosa Morales (director), met recently. A detailed report will be presented at the March LWVNM board meeting.

**ACTION REPORT**

Dick reported that the Legislative Reception and League Day will now be held virtually on February 2 and 3. Legislation expected during the upcoming session includes a constitutional amendment on redistricting, election bills, natural resources bills, and criminal justice issues. Regarding budgetary issues, there is a lot of money available for the Legislature to distribute and they will probably try to give funds away through tax breaks. The priorities recommended by the Action Committee will be redistricting, voting and election bills, and comprehensive natural resources bills. Barbara and Judy concur that several natural resources bills proposed are good, comprehensive bills except for the Hydrogen Hub which we will oppose. LWVNM will also oppose the proposed reduction in the GRT even though it is regressive because any reduction in taxes should be balanced by an increase from another source.

The Action Committee, which meets via Zoom every Friday at 4:00 p.m., is not recommending that advocates be required to register as lobbyists. Registered lobbyists often are precluded from serving on boards. The Action Committee has developed a list of preferred lobbyists for the various issues we will be tracking.

Dick provided a written report summarizing the Special Session on Redistricting. The House received a passing grade from us on the process they followed. The House filed the Citizen Redistricting Committee (CRC) maps for New Mexico House and PEC and adhered to transparency in the redistricting process. The Senate, on the other hand, did not introduce any CRC maps. The maps passed by the Senate were drawn behind closed doors and the Senate did not explain the changes they made to the CRC maps. Native American consensus was included in all maps. Meredith objected to the tone of the critique of the Senate, but Hannah said she had no problem with the occasional rebuke.

A constitutional amendment on redistricting will be introduced in the 2022 Legislative Session by Representative Natalie Figueroa and will be supported by LWVNM.

Hannah thanked Dick for the work he has done and gave him credit for changing our relationship with the Native American community.

Judy asked if the legislative agenda proposed by the Governor was the same as her “message.” Dick responded that it was a good indication. He added that the Governor recently held a press conference with the Secretary of State on voting issues.

“Making Democracy Work” is an event proposed for either lunch or dinner on March 24 or March 25. The location is possibly the Sheraton Uptown in Albuquerque. Dick anticipates that this would be a good outreach event which will be open to all. The Action Committee will coordinate this event. We can use the funds originally approved for the Legislative Reception, but Dick also thinks there should be a fee to attend.

**VOTING and ELECTIONS**

Renny submitted a detailed report to the board describing the joint efforts of the Governor and Secretary of State to protect the right to vote and expand access to the ballot. Their proposal will protect and expand voting rights in New Mexico by expanding online voter registration, providing further protections for Native American voters, and by creating a permanent absentee ballot request list. Renny said that several groups in favor of election reform have asked LWVNM to endorse their positions. Dick said that this could be done through the broad LWVUS position.

Specifics of the Governor’s proposal include: increasing voter access by extending the early voting period; designating Election Day as a state holiday; allowing 16-year-olds to participate in local elections; creating a permanent absentee voter list; expanding online voter registration opportunities; extending the timeline for mailing ballots to voters and extending the deadline for accepting ballots to accommodate for mail delivery time; supporting voting access for Native Americans by expanding the timeline to request alternative voting sites; improving automatic voter registration; enabling nominating petitions to be securely submitted electronically; automatically restoring the voting rights of convicted felons; and creating an option to vote a straight party ballot. Most of these proposals are consistent with our positions, but Renny anticipates some opposition in the legislature. He will coordinate with Hannah regarding what we can support based on LWVUS positions. Regardless of what we will support, it will be important for us to educate voters.

Renny also participated in a cybersecurity workshop, and he provided several helpful links on protecting yourself and what to do if you are attacked.

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

Judy and Barbara reported on the pending natural resources bills. As previously noted, we will oppose the Hydrogen Hub bill supported by the Governor. It is not clear what the bill will look like but will apparently include tax breaks for the oil and gas industry and focus on Blue Hydrogen, which is not a clean fuel. Its emissions are clean, but the process of making hydrogen is not. Barbara said that we would support many of the remaining bills, most of which have to do with climate change.

**WEBSITE and DOCUMENT STORAGE**

Akkana had nothing new to report on the website. She noted, however, that the Action Study Group held its first meeting which went well. They will continue to meet every Thursday afternoon and hope to be a source for the Action Committee.

**PROGRAM**

Concurrence with the LWVCA Position on Criminal Justice was discussed extensively. The California position was again provided as well as the draft LWVNM Position on Criminal Justice proposed by Barbara, which includes the current LWVNM Positions. Each local League met to discuss the California position. Los Alamos, through Barbara, created the alternative position based on its forum. Barbara added that if we wish to include a discussion on victim rights, we would either need to do a study or find a state position with which to concur. The CNM forum generated a lot of interest in both funding for the Albuquerque Police Department and “tough on crime” bills. Most participants in that forum were as concerned about violent crime as police oversight. Eileen reported that Southern New Mexico had an excellent forum with experienced speakers, but she was under the impression that our task was to either concur with the California position or not. She was surprised to see the draft proposed by Los Alamos. The Santa Fe League held a forum with a guest from California who gave a thorough background on how they developed their position. Santa Fe also concluded that they could concur with the California position.

Hannah said that LWVNM could concur with the California position with amendments. Barbara said that the draft proposed by Los Alamos omitted items that were unnecessary or that we did not agree with. California asked us to concur with their position so they could bring it to LWVUS. Judy found the Los Alamos proposal confusing and said she was uncomfortable taking so much out of the California position. Jody agreed and suggested that a proper study should be done.

Kathy suggested that we move forward with concurring or not with the California position, and then any necessary “tweaks” could be done outside the board meeting. Judy then moved that we concur with the California Position on Criminal Justice and this motion was seconded by Meredith. Akkana asked how the California position would be merged with our own position and without that knowledge she would be opposed. Jody was not prepared to vote to concur but would vote in support of bringing the California position to LWVUS to pursue. Following some further discussion, 10 voted in favor of concurring with the California Position on Criminal Justice, 5 voted against, and 1 abstained. The motion passed. Dick said that we can now use this position to respond to issues during the upcoming Legislative Session. The position can now be edited before the 2023 Convention. Hannah asked for volunteers from each of the local Leagues to form a subcommittee responsible for amending the language. Karen, Eileen, Jody, Meredith, and Barbara all volunteered. Eileen suggested that there is enough interest in the topic that we should consider doing an update to our own position on justice.

Kathy then brought up the LWVUS Program Planning Survey which we were asked to respond to by March 1, 2022, in advance of the 2022 Convention. In particular, we have been asked about our support for continuing the Campaign for Making Democracy Work (voting rights, improving elections, redistricting, and money in politics), and whether we recommend other program items. At our last meeting, we agreed to recommend concurrence with the Connecticut position on broadband and the New York health care position. LWVCA has asked that we support the increase in LWVUS lobbying efforts in 2022-2024 to support legislation for comprehensive immigration reform and expanded paths to citizenship. Dick suggested that we also ask for making election officials nonpartisan, which will be an emerging issue nationally. Barbara does not believe that there is a LWVUS position on this latter issue, but it could be proposed as a resolution at Convention. Hannah will query the other states to see if they have a position on nonpartisan election officials.

Meredith moved that we add immigration reform to the LWVUS Program Planning Survey and Dick seconded this motion. All voted in favor except for two abstentions.

Becky then moved that we add a position or resolution on nonpartisan election officials to the LWVUS Program Planning Survey and Barbara seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

Meredith suggested that the Action Committee discuss nonpartisan judicial races. Dick thought that this was already in the LWVUS position and Meredith agreed to investigate this.

**BOARD ADMINISTRATION**

Barbara reported that our bylaws require any emergency decision be presented at the next board meeting for ratification. On January 9, 2022, via email, Kathy moved that we cancel the in-person League Day events and schedule the event virtually. Meredith seconded this motion, and all who responded voted in favor. Now we need to repeat the vote for the record. Meredith then moved that we ratify this vote and Susan seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Barbara reported that our bylaws also require the board to appoint four members to serve on the Executive Committee in addition to the president. Because Kathy is now our first vice president, Meredith moved that Kathy replace Janet on the Executive Committee and this motion was seconded by Eileen. All voted in favor.

Barbara also noted that the 2022 Council is scheduled to be held on April 30, 2022. This is ordinarily a three-hour meeting followed by a brief board meeting. Delegates include all members of the state board, the presidents of the four local Leagues, one member chosen by each League board, and one member at large who would be voted on by the LWVNM board. The last Convention was hosted by SNM, and the previous Council was hosted by Santa Fe, so Barbara suggests that the 2022 Council be hosted by CNM. In this event, Los Alamos would host the next Convention. Karen, on behalf of CNM, agreed to host this Council at their Albuquerque office unless it is held virtually. Barbara asked Susan to recruit an at-large member to serve on the Council.

For the benefit of new members, Barbara explained that the purpose of Council is to review ongoing activity and allow the delegates to give guidance to the board. The Council is authorized to change program only in the event of an emergency, using the procedure described in the bylaws. The board must review the current budget and distribute proposed modifications at least 30 days before Council. Any proposed changes to the program or budget must be decided before then.

**DEMOCRACY ISSUES**

Eileen brought up the serious issue of threats to our democracy. Recent media reports suggest that the 2024 election could become a crisis and violence could be expected. The League can have a positive impact on our democracy. A League member in Silver City, Ann McMahon, has suggested that the League team up with an organization such as Pro Publica regarding consistent messaging and hire the best firm that can be found to assist with these messaging efforts. Eileen thinks that Ms. McMahon could put together a presentation or plan we could then adopt. Hannah said that she has an upcoming meeting with LWVUS President Turner and will bring up this issue. Furthermore, she suggested that each local League sign up for Outreach Circle which allows for fast messaging to your personal circle. Outreach Circle operates on three levels (national, state, and local) and she will discuss this with our liaison. Hannah added that LWVUS is doing a lot in the area of democracy protection already.

Dick suggested that perhaps this issue could be added to the Program Planning Survey. Eileen then moved that we add Strengthening Democracy to the Program Planning Survey and this motion was seconded by Donna. All voted in favor except for two abstentions.

**EDUCATION**

Eileen spoke with Senator Soules, who agreed to look at reforming the Public Education Commission through a bill in the next session. Meredith thanked Los Alamos for the Legislative Preview which included Kurt Steinhaus, the new Secretary of Education. It was refreshing to hear from him that the changes required by the Yazzie/Martinez decision are the right thing to do. Many great things are happening, including budgetary increases and allowing tribal language teachers without credentials to serve their students.

**MEMBERSHIP**

Susan said there is an individual who wants to join LWVNM who lives in Santa Fe. She wonders if it is because Santa Fe charges more for membership than does LWVNM. It seems that each local League has a different fee for joining. Barbara said that any change to dues must be approved at Convention.

**SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL**

Karen provided a written report in which she noted that two members of Congress, one from Illinois and one from California, are forming a bipartisan caucus to discuss national solutions for SNF storage and disposal. Karen and Bobbi participated in a planning meeting with LWVIL to discuss a preferred approach for the adoption of the LWVNM Position on Spent Nuclear Fuel storage safety. While prior attempts to interest the LWVCA president in concurring with the LWVNM SNF storage safety position have been unsuccessful, Karen has had a productive conversation with a member of the Greater Los Angeles LWV who agreed to reach out to other California local Leagues about this issue. Karen had nothing new to report on the NRC’s request for additional information from Holtec. Karen also noted that Senator Steinborn will introduce a “Rad Waste Task Force” bill which goes beyond the scope of our SNF position, including disposal. She has not been able to reach Senator Steinborn to discuss this matter.

Meredith suggested that we consider a new study to cover more than just spent nuclear fuel. Karen said that LWVUS already has a position that is more generic and would allow for advocacy on other issues.

**VOTER SERVICES**

Judy reported that the Vote411 group met for a debriefing and discussed what went well and what went wrong last year. LWVUS is revamping its website and making improvements and Judy expects a lot of positive changes to come. It was clear that the four local Leagues and LWVNM need better coordination. She has asked the Secretary of State’s Elections Director to address issues related to wrong email addresses and phone numbers. She is also hoping we can find a temporary employee to upload candidate lists and ensure that GIS data is correct. The Office of the Secretary of State is now the repository for all GIS data. Judy thinks that the Thornburg Foundation will help financially with public relations on this issue. She has also asked the SOS to link Vote411 to its website, and they agreed to consider it. LWVUS will also add its logo to the Vote411 landing page.

**VIDEO PROJECT**

Hannah is interested in the false stolen election campaign and thinks an easy video presentation debunking these false claims would be helpful. This video project is being investigated and she is pleased that we have funds in our budget to cover such a project. Once completed, Hannah would like it linked to social media.

**LOCAL LEAGUE REPORTS**

Submitted in writing and will be included in the next edition of *La Palabra*.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS, INITIATIVES, AND OTHER BUSINESS**

The next board meeting is scheduled for March 5, 2022, via Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:28 p.m.

Written by Rebecca Chaiken (January 17, 2022)

Edited by Barbara Calef (January 17, 2022)