**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW MEXICO**

**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**MARCH 5, 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 and Action Vice Chair

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

Janet Blair, Communications

Renny Ashleman, Voting and Elections

Jody Larson, Archivist

Rebecca Álvarez, JEDI

**CALL TO ORDER and INTRODUCTIONS**

Hannah called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. All members introduced themselves and explained their position with the LWVNM.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA and APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Hannah asked that the order of the agenda be amended. Rebecca C. moved that the amended agenda be approved, and Judy seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

Dick moved to approve the January 15, 2022, board meeting minutes and Kathy seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Hannah mourned the failure of SB 144 and discussed her fears about what is occurring in Otero County. We are facing voter suppression efforts, especially with the rural and Native vote. Hannah, Judy, and Akkana recently met with a representative of the Rural Utah Project (RUP), which was started by the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, an environmental advocacy group. The RUP staff have been working to gain access to voting for Native Americans, especially Navajo, without mailing addresses. The participants discussed reaching out to the southwest Native communities and asking what the League can do to help. It is delicate work. Hannah believes that she has seen an improvement in relations with these communities since she first took over the LWVNM presidency. Hannah, Dick, and Judy will meet and discuss some options, but Hannah will first reach out to LWVUS.

Hannah suggested that LWVNM send a welcoming letter to our membership, like the letters sent out by the local Leagues. New members currently do not receive much information about the role of the state League. She asked for volunteers to help with this project. She hopes that reaching out to our members statewide will result in more volunteers to work on committees, especially with Communications. She added that we need both backup and succession. Furthermore, we do not have a history of LWVNM on our website, and Hannah would like to see both short and long versions for our members. Dick believes that such a thing has already been prepared.

Hannah ended by saying that, while the world looks gloomy right now, she participated in a streaming event during which there was a cheerful discussion of voter suppression. The conclusion was that voter suppression efforts are on the rise because we are winning!

**TREASURER'S REPORT**

Suzanne presented the Treasurer's Report showing an ending balance of $34,152.86. The report reflects income from PMP payments totaling $9,016. It was also noted that LWVNM has been approved for an additional Thornburg Foundation grant of $50,000, the funds of which will be held by LWVSFC until our 501(c)(3) status is approved by the IRS.

Dick noted that, once our 501(c)(3) status is established, we will need to decide whether PMP is considered “public support.” It is unclear how the IRS will interpret this. Suzanne will consult with the accountant who prepared last years’ tax returns.

Suzanne then moved that the board approve the purchase of QuickBooks for this year, at a non-profit cost of $75. She noted that it will be needed to provide data to our accountant for the new fiscal year and because of our pending 501(c)(3) status. Judy seconded this motion, and all voted in favor.

**ACTION REPORT**

Dick said that he has sent out invitations to a March 17 event entitled “Polarization in Politics.” He has not received any responses and he asked to be informed if we are interested.

Several individual reports were submitted to the board detailing the results of the 2022 Legislative Session, which he said was largely successful other than budget, environmental, and voting issues. The Governor has signed all the passed bills that the League supported.

Dick reported on the Budget and Taxes. His report reflects that the budget was increased by 14 percent over the previous year due to federal funding and increased revenue from oil and gas. This resulted in much needed increased salaries for educators and state workers. Unfortunately, the excess revenue also led to a series of recurring tax cuts that will result in a significant annual loss of revenue. Tax cuts during good times lead to loss of revenue and then to cutting programs during bad times. There were some tax credits that have proven to lead to less dependence on fossil fuels. There has been a promise of comprehensive tax reform during the 2023 session.

Separate reports will be provided on Voting and Elections, Redistricting, Education, and Natural Resources. Other pieces of legislation that passed addressed three Native American issues (HB 135, SB 12, and SB 13); predatory interest “payday” loans which were reduced from 175 percent to 36 percent (HB 132); and the establishment of a steady source of income for the New Mexico Housing Trust (SB 134). Although the memorial on modernizing the legislature did not pass, $100,000 was included in the budget for UNM to convene a task force on this issue. HB 97 (Rural Health Care Project Loans) did not pass, but the Governor nonetheless intends to fund a rural hospital. Meredith and Akkana noted that the Health Security Bill did not pass, but funding for family leave was secured.

The Action Committee was previously made up of a small group of involved activists but, since more people have joined and are participating, they decided that a Steering Committee was needed. This committee will develop agendas, trainings and orientation documents, calendars of Legislative Sessions, and procedures for selecting legislation to present to the larger committee and the board. Dick wants to spend more time on foreign policy and budget/tax reform, and the formation of this Steering Committee will free him up to work on these other issues. Hannah added that they have discussed having a three-person chair. Hannah can act as Dick’s understudy as he transitions to foreign policy. Following Renny’s recommendation, Judy moved that we establish a Steering Committee for Action with Hannah, Akkana, and Dick serving as co-chairs. Dick seconded this motion, and all voted in favor.

Meredith and Eileen reported on Education. They were delighted with the successes for education during this legislative session. The Governor has signed multiple education bills, which make up over half of the budget. According to their report, bills which passed include SB 1 (Increasing Teacher Salaries), SB 140 (Opportunity Scholarships Act, HB 13 (Teacher Residency Act), HB 60 (Native American Language Certificate Salaries), and HB 73 (Educational Retirees Returning to Work). Meredith noted that certification for non-citizens could be a game-changer for New Mexico, and Kurt Steinhaus is excited to work on this. Eileen added that HB 60, which we were not following, supports both our education and JEDI efforts.

Hannah said that she will be communicating with a representative of a coalition for passing the early childhood education constitutional amendment. While she will not be joining the coalition at present, Hannah asked if we could join based on our coalition policy. Dick asked for an email to the board after her meeting. Hannah also asked for more members to serve on the Education Committee.

Barbara and Judy reported on Natural Resources. Largely, they were very disappointed in the outcome of this legislative session. They followed 17 bills, including four related to hydrogen, which we opposed. Only two of the bills supported by the League passed. HB 34 (Solar Market Tax Credit Extension) and HB 125 (Sustainable Building Tax Credits Dates) were included in the Omnibus Tax and Revenue Bill (HB 163). The two bills which passed, HB 37 (Community Energy Efficiency Development Block Grant) and HB 164 (Uranium Mine Cleanup), have already been signed by the Governor. The Hydrogen Hub bills, which we opposed but were championed by the Governor, all failed. However, the Governor nevertheless has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with several neighboring states to form a Hydrogen Hub. Judy noted that this is totally outside the scope of any environmental policy the Governor has previously espoused. Numerous other environmental bills will be attempted again next year.

Dick reported on Redistricting. According to his report, HJR 9, a Constitutional Amendment (CA) for an Independent Redistricting Commission, passed the House Government, Elections, and Indian Affairs Committee on a 5-4 vote. Given the short session, Dick did not expect this bill to receive its next hearing, but he was very pleased that our goal for this short session was reached. New Mexico First will now reconvene the task force and work on the language for the CA for the 2023 session. As Suzanne already reported, the Thornburg Foundation approved a $50,000 grant, of which $35,000 will be used to continue our Fair Districts for New Mexico Campaign. Our consultant, Kathleen Burke, will continue the effort to build public and legislative support for an independent redistricting commission. The balance of the grant will be used for Vote411. Dick added that the issue of county and municipal redistricting has arisen because of lawsuits in Sandoval and San Juan Counties. We need to determine if LWV positions allow us to take a position on county and municipal redistricting, neither of which are limited by the New Mexico Constitution or by statute.

Renny reported on Voting and Elections. Not a single voting bill on our list survived, despite unprecedented support from several coalitions. SB 6 (Election Security and Administration) and SB 8 (New Mexico Voting Rights Act) were included in SB 144 (Intimidation of Election Workers), which contained important election security items. Issues which led to the demise of this bill included objections to a requirement for ballot drop boxes, youth voting, and ex-felon voting procedures. The short session, drafting errors, absentee voting concerns, and an agenda change on the last day of the session all contributed to the bills’ failure.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Janet reported on the effort, working alongside the Secretary of State’s Public Information Officer, to produce a short video explaining where your vote goes, and how your vote is counted. The video will include a narration, power point, and animation and will be published on Facebook, Instagram, and on our website. The video will be entitled “How is Your Vote Counted in New Mexico” and it will also cover how your vote is safeguarded and how you can be part of the process. Janet expects the cost of this video to be approximately $4,000. There was much discussion of where the funds for this video would come from. Suggestions included taking some of the money from our Thornburg Foundation grants, using funds already contained in our bank account or the Ed Fund, using money budgeted for the cancelled legislative reception, and securing corporate sponsors. Barbara suggested that we vote to approve the idea of the video and the funding details can be figured out later. Renny moved that, since this is fairly time sensitive, we move forward with the project using our own funds. Janet seconded this motion. Judy agreed to approach three banks and she challenged the rest of us to do the same. She added that securing corporate sponsors for this project should be easy once the video is produced. All voted in favor of Renny’s motion. Hannah agreed to approach Allen Oliver from the Thornburg Foundation to see if they will fund the video.

Later during this meeting, it was asked if the dollar amount for this project was included in the motion. Rebecca C.’s notes did not reflect this. Meredith moved that we use the money set aside for the legislative reception to fund this project. Because there were other possible sources of funding for this project, there was no second and it was agreed that the funding details can be left for another date.

**OUTREACH CIRCLE**

Hannah described Outreach Circle, which is an online platform that makes it easy to contact politicians to let them know how you feel about a particular subject. For example, LWVUS may send you a notice to call the White House. The notice would include talking points which you could include in your call. Once you press “done,” Outreach Circle will quantify what members are doing to support League efforts. This is a tool which will appeal to many younger members and will not supersede Constant Contact. Hannah added that this is free through LWVUS, but the Communications Committee would need more assistance. She is using Outreach Circle for LWVSFC. Susan moved that we approve securing Outreach Circle and Meredith seconded this motion. Responding to a question posed by Dick, Hannah said we would need to load our own contacts but that it is easy to do. She added that Outreach Circle may already have many contacts available. Barbara expressed the concern that many legislators do not pay attention to automated contacts, and she asked if there is evidence that this is helpful. Hannah said that this is not automated in that you use your own voice. Renny added that many legislators count these things via their staff. All voted in favor.

**WEBSITE and DOCUMENT STORAGE**

Akkana had nothing new to report on the website. Hannah asked for guidance on storing recordings, which is causing her storage issues. Eileen suggested that Hannah post the links on a YouTube channel. Akkana agreed with Eileen and added that Drop Box is another option.

**PROGRAM**

Kathy noted that we have previously discussed Ranked Choice Voting (RCV), also known as Instant Runoff Voting, but she asked if we should take a position on this. Kathy said that RCV is used in Las Cruces and LWVSNM includes “ranked choice voting for all elections” and “implementation of ranked choice voting best practices, ensuring the winning candidate attains at least 50 percent of the vote” under their election procedures position. She also provided the position from LWV-Vermont which reads, “In accordance with the LWV’s position of promoting political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government, the LWVVT will support legislation that assures that the candidate preferred by a majority of voters wins the election. Specifically, the LWVVT will support ranked choice voting [RCV] for all statewide elections.” Barbara said that this was recently discussed in Los Alamos and the board was generally split. She added that Representative Christine Chandler and Lonna Atkeson (UNM Political Science Professor Emerita) are opposed. Barbara would like to see a statewide forum on this issue. Akkana does not like the specificity of the name and would prefer a study on the issue. Dick reminded the board that we approved concurring with the Vermont position in 2018 but it was overridden at the 2019 Convention. He also agreed that a statewide forum would be helpful. Judy added that the Vermont position was based on a study they conducted. Further discussion led to the conclusion that a statewide forum makes the most sense. Mario Jimenez from Common Cause and Lonna Atkeson (since Christine Chandler is running for reelection) were suggested as speakers. An explanatory article in *La Palabra* would be published before the forum to better prepare our members for the forum.

Kathy then introduced a proposal from the LWV-Maine asking us to join in recommending to the LWVUS board a Digital Democracy Study. Kathy was unsure how today’s discussion would work logistically because LWV-Maine asked for our response by March 1. The proposed study would investigate the role of social media giants in undermining democracy. “Consistent with the League’s ‘Making Democracy Work’ program, we [LWV-Maine] propose a study to examine the assault on democracy playing out in the online sphere. Operating outside the election process itself, online activities have been documented that suppress Black votes and amplify false and misleading information in order to affect election outcomes.” Barbara, Dick, and Becky all agreed that such a study is necessary and that we should support LWV-Maine. Dick moved that we join with LWV-Maine recommending this study to the LWVUS board and Susan seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Kathy will try and submit our approval despite missing the deadline.

**VOTER SERVICES**

Judy reported that a project assistant has been hired to help with Vote411. The assistant will help Judy and the local Leagues coordinate their activities and get Vote411 ready for the elections.

The Secretary of State and Attorney General have issued a warning over an election “audit” taking place in Otero County. This “audit” was approved by the Otero County Commission and reportedly includes door-to-door “auditors” asking people how they voted. Judy noted that the Otero County Clerk, a Republican, is opposed to this. Judy said that we need to take some action. She and Hannah have discussed several options including talking to the Otero County Clerk, contacting the ACLU to see what, if any, action they are taking, and reaching out to LWVUS. Dick said that this is voter intimidation and a violation of the secret ballot. We should sign on to any lawsuit and, at a minimum, put out a press release. Hannah will contact the ACLU and Otero County Clerk on Monday. Meredith said we should pass a resolution right now condemning voter intimidation. Janet said that a resolution would go out as a press release, but an op-ed would express our opinion. Dick said that whatever action we take, it should not be done “on the fly.” An ad hoc drafting committee was formed, and it will be made up of Janet, Jody, Judy, Dick, and Eileen.

Judy submitted a rough draft of questions to be posed to statewide candidates via Vote411. These questions were used previously on Vote411. The questions need to be unbiased and varied. Following input from the board, a smaller group will convene to finalize wording which will then be submitted to the board for final approval. Barbara said that she is opposed to the format of Judy’s questions, specifically yes/no and scale questions.

U.S. House of Representatives – it was agreed to remove the proposed question on the role of the national laboratories. Barbara suggested that a foreign policy question be added; Akkana asked for a question on health care; Eileen wanted a question regarding the Equal Rights Amendment; and Meredith suggested we have a question regarding income support measures. Judy noted that respondents will not respond to more than five or six questions, and she selected the ones most people are concerned about, including climate and elections.

Governor – Dick asked that a question on tax reform be added. Susan did not support the question about protecting water resources because no one would respond in the negative. Barbara suggested the following two questions: What action, if any, should be taken at the state level to reduce our use of fossil fuels and encourage the use of clean energy? and What steps would you take to diversify the economy?

Lieutenant Governor - Meredith asked that the first part of question 2 be removed and most agreed with her. Dick suggested that a third question be something like, “how do you see your role as President of the Senate?”

Secretary of State – it was suggested that question 4 be removed because campaign finance is an issue for the Ethics Commission. It was also suggested that question 5, regarding open primaries, be removed. Dick asked that a question regarding the candidate’s top three priorities be added. Jody questioned the wording of question 2, and Barbara responded that the subcommittee would review the questions for bias.

 State Auditor, Treasurer, and Attorney General – all questions were posed previously, and no one proposed any changes.

Commissioner of Public Lands – Dick suggested that question 4 was biased as written. Judy feels strongly about including the question and Renny suggested rewording the question. Jody agreed with Dick, but she also expressed concern about question 3, and asked that it be reworded.

New Mexico Supreme Court and New Mexico Court of Appeals - Judy noted that the questions will be separated for the different offices.

Public Education Commission - question 5 will be removed as it was included in error. Barbara liked the questions and Dick suggested a question on whether the PEC should be reformed. Meredith suggested asking what other duties should be added, and Eileen mentioned that Senator Soules may propose a study on how the PEC should be reformed. Judy does not want to focus only on what a candidate would do when elected, and Barbara agreed.

Everyone agreed to the four questions posed for candidates in districts outside our four Leagues. The subcommittee to review the questions includes Dick, Barbara, Akkana, and Judy.

**BOARD ADMINISTRATION**

Hannah asked Kathy to work on the issue of “onboarding” to help new board members adjust more easily. Kathy is using an outline developed in Texas and she is making progress in filling out the text. She will send it to us next week for our input. Rebecca C. suggested that more seasoned board members not use names without clarifying who they are discussing.

**COUNCIL**

Susan sent out communications to our members-at-large asking for participation in Council. To date, she has only received one response from a member who cannot participate.

The 2022 Council will take place on April 30. Registration will begin at 11:30 to be followed by lunch and then the Council agenda. The board meeting will directly follow Council. There is no need for a reception the preceding evening. Karen said that it will be held in the conference room of the CNM office, which seats 60. The proposed speaker is Heather Balas, who is now with the Election Reformers Network. Dick will see if she is available to discuss national election issues. After some discussion, it was agreed that the event will be held in person and not offered as a hybrid. The registration fee should cover the cost of the lunch as well as the materials packet. Hannah, Kathy, and Barbara will develop the agenda.

The question arose regarding how many delegates participate. Each League is allowed to send its President or a substitute and one other member. A local League with two Co-Presidents can send them as delegates and Santa Fe, which has no President, can send two board members.

For the LWVUS Convention, Hannah noted that LWVUS allows for one delegate for the first 49 members; two delegates for Leagues with 50 to 99 members; and three delegates for Leagues with 100 to 149 members. Karen then asked if CNM can send four delegates because they have 178 members. This was agreed upon.

**ED FUND UPDATE**

The Ed Fund board, currently made up of six members, met for the second time. Hannah asked for two new members, one from CNM and one from Los Alamos. The next meeting will be held in June. Our 501(c)(3) status is moving forward. Renny has stepped in to help deal with the attorney because he understands the process.

**JEDI**

Rebecca Á. Reported that the group last met in January, and they are on hiatus until April because of the schedules of its younger members. Her report details the recruitment/research questionnaire previously piloted for law school students at UNM. Eighteen students expressed an interest in joining the League. All were contacted about this opportunity, but none responded. The JEDI Committee is evaluating what they might do about this. JEDI has a new member, Rachel Begay from the Navajo Nation. The internal DEI survey was previously circulated to the entire membership of over 500 people. Over 200 opened the email and 99 responded. Rebecca Á. said there was no overrepresentation from any one League. Respondents identified as white (84 percent), Black (0 percent), Hispanic (7 percent) and Native (1 percent). This does not reflect New Mexico demographics. Not all board members received this survey. Rebecca C. noted that she received the survey, but it could not be completed because of some errors in the survey. Hannah asked Rebecca Á. and Judy to see what can be done about sending it out again.

Hannah asked about land use acknowledgements and Rebecca Á. responded that JEDI has no formal position on this. Hannah also asked about a mentorship program, which Rebecca Á. said would be discussed at their April meeting. Hannah suggested they seek out materials from LWVUS.

**LWVUS CONVENTION**

The LWVUS Convention will take place in Denver at the end of June. We are allowed three delegates. Hannah will be needed, so she will be one delegate. Meredith is on the Immigration Committee so she will be our second delegate. Becky suggested that our third delegate should be Kathy who agreed to attend depending on COVID. Dick moved that Hannah, Meredith, and Kathy be our delegates and Rebecca C. seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

**NM LISTENS**

Meredith reported on a statewide online conversation on Democracy and Elections. It will take place on May 22 from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. Panelists will include Dr. Lonna Atkeson, Cindy Nava (Executive Director of Transform Education New Mexico), Dr. Christa Slaton (NMSU Professor of Government Emerita), and Bethany Tabor (coordinator of New Mexico Listens). The moderator has not yet been finalized. Meredith said the event will be free but registration through Eventbrite will be needed. She wants to offer membership to LWVNM, which Hannah approved.

**SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL**

Karen reported on the two most recent activities undertaken by the SNF Storage Safety Committee. First, they responded to the Federal Register Notice proposing a federally managed Consolidated Interim Storage facility. Second, Karen and Bobbi will present the April 2021 SNF Storage Safety Position to LWV-IL on March 8, 2022 for proposed concurrence.

**STUDIES UPDATE**

Suzanne reported that there is still no movement with the Judicial Selection study. While the Courts have lifted some restrictions, masks are still required. Suzanne maintains that observers need to see people’s faces and expressions. The study will hopefully go forward in the future.

Rebecca Á. reported that HB 135 was her main reason for being involved in the Tribal Law Study. She expected it to be heard during the 2023 Legislative Session. Since it passed this year, there is less pressure and she requested permission to extend the study another year to give it the time it deserves. Rebecca Á. made this motion and it was seconded by Kathy. All voted in favor. Barbara reminded the group that this will still need to be discussed at Council.

**LOCAL LEAGUE REPORTS**

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

**ANNOUNCEMENTS, INITIATIVES, AND OTHER BUSINESS**

The deadline for *La Palabra* is March 8, 2022.

The next board meeting is scheduled for April 30, 2022, directly following Council. This will be held at the CNM office located at 6739 Academy Road NE, Suite 124, in Albuquerque.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Written by Rebecca Chaiken (March 7, 2022)

Edited by Barbara Calef (March 7, 2022)