**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW MEXICO**

**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**SEPTEMBER 24, 2022**

**MESA PUBLIC LIBRARY in LOS ALAMOS, and VIA ZOOM**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

Barbara Calef, Second Vice President and LWVLA Co-President (via Zoom)

Dick Mason, Action Chair

Rebecca Chaiken, Secretary

Suzanne Ronneau, Treasurer (via Zoom)

Judy Williams, Past President/Voter Services

Meredith Machen, Education/Immigration/Special Projects (via Zoom)

Karen Douglas, LWVCNM Co-President and Spent Nuclear Fuel

Eileen VanWie, LWVSNM Co-President

Becky Shankland, LWVLA Co-President

Janet Blair, Communications (via Zoom)

Rebecca Álvarez, JEDI (via Zoom)

Ann LePage, Reproductive Rights

Donna Sandoval, LWVCNM Co-President (via Zoom)

Akkana Peck, Webmaster and Action Vice Chair (via Zoom)

**CALL TO ORDER and INTRODUCTIONS**

Kathy 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**

Judy added discussions concerning the Conflict of Interest policy and Ethics issues, and Dick added Voting and Elections under Action. Barbara added Club Express under Website and Document Storage. Kathy noted that the word Council should be deleted from the Approval of Minutes item. Becky moved that the amended agenda be approved, and Barbara seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

Suzanne made a correction to the Treasurer’s Report to reflect two separate $100 donations. Barbara added to the Land Acknowledgement section that she was to review the language proposed by JEDI. Barbara moved to approve the amended July 16, 2022, board meeting minutes and Dick seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

**TREASURER'S REPORT**

Suzanne presented the Treasurer's Report showing an ending balance of $47,253.31. The report reflects $12,750 in income from LWVUS for our Get Out the Vote (GOTV) efforts. The balance of the $15,000 GOTV grant will be awarded when our work is done. The report also reflects a payment of $1,878.08 to Sunny505 which is part of the total invoice for our voting explainer video.

There were no objections to the Treasurer’s Report, and it is accepted as presented.

**ACTION REPORT**

Akkana reported on the work of the LWVNM Action Committee. According to the written report, Ann brought the group up to date on Reproductive Rights and whether our state legislature should codify the right to abortion, or other laws addressing reproductive justice. There are other related issues that might be candidates for bills such as “geofencing,” (a way that phones can be tracked going to a particular place, such as an abortion clinic). The Action Committee also discussed Crisis Pregnancy Centers, faith-based establishments that present themselves as medical centers but, instead of offering abortion services, they give out an experimental medication they say reverses the effects of abortion pills. Action does not yet know specifics about any bills which may be filed during the next legislative session.

Redistricting is another area the Action Committee discussed. A poll of New Mexico voters showed that 77 percent want an independent redistricting committee, while only 12 percent are opposed. If this can make it onto the ballot, it would likely pass.

Regarding Tax Policy, Dick participated in a meeting recently during which ways to make our tax system more progressive while still providing more revenue was discussed. Regarding Voting and Elections, there has been much discussion on whether there would be one large omnibus bill or several smaller bills. The Committee hopes for the latter. Hannah and Dick will meet with the Secretary of State’s office (SOS) to discuss what bills they want to see. In this report, Hannah encouraged everyone to use Outreach Circle to alert people when things happen at the legislature or to prompt people to contact their legislators.

During the meeting, Judy noted that three new bills were discussed with Mandy Vigil: a clean-up bill, ex-felon voting rights, and physical and cyber election security and disclosure.

The Legislative Reception will be held on February 15, 2023, at Rio Chama. Linda Siegle has agreed to speak at the Advocacy Workshop on January 7, 2023, and Dick has found someone to approach Senator Shendo.

The Action Committee will be switching their meetings to Wednesdays at 5:30 because many members had difficulty attending on Fridays. This will be revisited during the next legislative session.

**MODERNIZING THE LEGISLATURE**

According to Judy’s report, Common Cause has received additional funding from the Thornburg Foundation to increase the public poll number to 800 and add two focus groups. The public poll questions will concern session length, legislative pay, and legislator staff. During our last meeting, we agreed to contribute $1,000 towards this effort. Judy is awaiting an address where our check should be sent. Mario Jimenez is now the Executive Director of Common Cause New Mexico.

The UNM Bureau of Business and Economic Research received a $100,000 contract to conduct a study of several facets of modernization. The study includes research on other state legislatures, interviews with legislators and staff, and a survey of legislators. The survey is going slowly because of lack of responses.

Constitutional Amendments have been drafted on legislative compensation and session length. Constitutional Amendments on institutional and personal staff for the legislature remain pending.

The Ethics Watch Coalition and other groups are working on the issue of ethics. New Mexico has weak ethics laws with respect to disclosure, and Judy expects pushback on bills that would require more disclosure by legislators. Campaign finance reporting and harassment will be discussed at their next meeting. Dick added that it would be good to file one comprehensive ethics bill.

**REDISTRICTING**

Dick reported that Hannah has agreed to serve as co-Project Leader for Fair Districts of New Mexico (FDNM). They are still working out duties.

Kathleen Burke will be gone for the first three weeks of December because she has been accepted as a LWVUS delegate to the COP27 in Egypt. Maia Pugh will provide some support in Kathleen’s absence along with some social media support for FDNM.

Dr. Gabe Sanchez of UNM has collaborated with Redistricting Partners and Dr. David Cottrell of the University of Georgia to produce a comprehensive evaluation of the 2021 redistricting efforts in New Mexico. As previously reported in these minutes, 77 percent of respondents want an independent redistricting commission. As soon as the press release goes out on Tuesday, the report will be available to the public. FDNM and New Mexico First will be hosting a public webinar on the evaluation on October 4.

A presentation will be made to the Courts, Corrections, and Justice Interim Committee in either November or early December. Panelists will include FDNM, New Mexico First, Dr. Sanchez, and Native American representatives.

Dick and Hannah will be following up with New Mexico State Senators, New Mexico House candidates, and candidates for statewide office to gauge their support for an independent redistricting committee.

**REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS**

Ann reported that she and Hannah attended a meeting of the Southwest Women’s Law Center during which they discussed what their focus should be for the next legislative session. This group was strongly opposed to “positive” laws for abortion but were confident that they could defeat a “negative” abortion law. They will try and get some data privacy protection concerning geofencing and provide local ordinances about Crisis Pregnancy Centers. Dick noted that Christus St. Vincent is required to tell women that they do not provide abortions and refer patients elsewhere. This may be part of their licensing requirements.

Ann also attended a Planned Parenthood (PP) meeting during which the proposed abortion clinic in Las Cruces was discussed. She noted that a Crisis Pregnancy Center has already rented a space next door. Eileen added that there are already two abortion clinics in Las Cruces and there is some concern that there will be difficulty finding health care providers for a third one. PP is working on getting the necessary funds to help women coming from neighboring states. PP is also in favor of using the word “abortion” as opposed to reproductive justice or reproductive rights, and they are in favor of long-term birth control methods. Judy added that there are two schools of thought on using the word abortion because terms like “reproductive rights” include more than just abortion rights. Rebecca Á said that these issues are particularly important for women of color.

Dick will ask Gwyneth Doland with New Mexico in Depth if she would consider doing a story on Crisis Pregnancy Centers.

Rebecca Á noted that some young women of color have been reluctant to join the League because of its stance on abortion. Dick added that this may stem from historical sterilization campaigns against minority communities.

**TAX and BUDGET**

According to Kathy’s report, the LWVNM Taxes and Budget Subcommittee has been following the work of the Interim Committee on Revenue and Stabilization and Tax Policy. Legislators might be interested in the elimination of gross receipts tax (GRT) expenditures to broaden the tax base; the elimination of direct business tax pyramiding; a reduction in the GRT rate; implementing dynamic scoring in assessing tax efficiency and effectiveness; and increasing fuel taxes to support infrastructure and economic development needs.

League subcommittee members also participated in a meeting of the Fairness Project. Speakers reported that we could expect to see more paid media and op-eds on Constitutional Amendment 1 concerning the Permanent Funds. Bill Jordan of NM Voices for Children discussed potential tax changes such as doubling of the child tax credit, a possible minimum corporate income tax, repealing GRT exceptions, and a possible real estate transfer tax in place of an effort to raise the property tax. There was also discussion of more funds where the state could “tuck away” money (for example to support developmental disabilities, behavioral health, and communities affected by the energy transition).

Kathy emphasized the interest in surplus funds from the COVID experience and to “stash” this money away. She does not see a League position on this that would allow us to weigh in on the issue. From a personal standpoint, it is not a good way to budget. Barbara said that it is her understanding that the state allocates money for projects not yet realized. Judy said that Senator Wirth wants comprehensive tax reform, but it might not happen because we are flush with money.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Janet reported that the video produced by Sunny505 is now on the website, Facebook, and YouTube (and it was played during the board meeting lunch break). This video was also split into four one-minute segments that will be broadcast on KNME in Clovis and Las Cruces. It will be clear that the snippets are not comprehensive and that there is more information to be had. There will also be shorter Public Service Announcements for distribution throughout the state in both English and Spanish. Sunny505 is working on a translation into Navajo as well. Judy noted that the New Mexico Community Foundation may fund additional publicity for this endeavor.

According to the written report in the board packet, Maia Pugh has created a calendar of social media posts for the period through the election. These will be posted on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. Maia is also inquiring with Spotify and Pandora about advertising costs. Outreach Circle will also be putting out as many social media posts as possible. Early next week, Maia will be trying a Facebook ad in the Farmington area as a trial run.

**WEBSITE and DOCUMENT STORAGE**

Meredith and Barbara attended a workshop on Club Express at the LWVUS Convention. Barbara said that the Los Alamos League’s membership director expressed concerns about preserving our data, and Club Express sounded like a possible solution. Prior to the presentation, both she and Akkana had concerns about Club Express, for different reasons, but they both believe this may be a solution. Barbara discussed Club Express with the president of the El Paso League. The LWVTX provided each local League with $960 to purchase a Club Express plan. While it took some time to get set up, they have been very pleased with the service.

Club Express provides for a free trial period. Barbara proposes that LWVNM approve Akkana investigating Club Express further via this free trial period. If Club Express were to be adopted in the future, it would replace Constant Contact, Outreach Circle, and Dropbox. Akkana said it could offer us a lot. Club Express would provide document storage, keep track of our membership, and payments. It could also be advantageous for our local Leagues.

Meredith moved that Akkana investigate Club Express further through the free trial period. Becky seconded this motion, and all voted in favor.

**PROGRAM**

Previously, LWVNM voted to concur with the LWVCA Position on Criminal Justice. We subsequently formed a committee to blend this position with the LWVNM Position on the Administration of Justice. Kathy provided this new document, the proposed LWVNM Administration of Justice Position, dated August 22, 2022. If this is adopted, it will replace our current position along with our concurrence with LWVCA. Dick moved that we adopt this position, and the motion was seconded by Karen.

Suzanne requested that the committee consider adding a phrase under the Public Defender Program to allow for funding for certain civil cases. Victims of domestic violence often need counsel to protect their custodial rights to their children. Under Policies for Incarceration, Suzanne asked that incarcerated people be provided with adequate medications. She noted that jails often will not provide medications which have been prescribed, including certain heart and psychotropic medications. Judy added that certain evidence-based medications, such as Suboxone, are also not provided by jail staff. Barbara responded that the committee was aware of such issues but could not include them in this position without a study. She asked that the position as drafted be approved after which a study could be undertaken regarding other issues that have been mentioned (noting that the second issue is covered by another LWVNM position). Dick added that we already have a position on behavioral health.

Kathy suggested we vote on the position as circulated. The committee worked on this issue for months and had input from the local Leagues. She added that the LWVNM positions are subject to interpretation by the LWVNM board.

Judy then called the question. All voted in favor of calling the question.

Regarding Dick’s motion, all voted in favor.

In addition to Suzanne’s suggested changes, Rebecca Á thinks that issues around sexual assault with a focus on Native American women may be a separate piece from our current position. Eileen added that the Red Flag law warrants more training on how to use it and she added that there were many issues that did not make it into the new position, but she was unsure whether a full study would be needed. Dick asked for a written suggestion on any suggested study and Kathy noted that we need to secure support from our members for any study undertaken. We could also look at other state Leagues’ positions. Meredith volunteered to research violence prevention positions of other Leagues.

Any suggested changes to this position can be submitted via email to Kathy. She will then compile them for review at a future board meeting.

**GOVERNANCE**

The Conflict of Interest policy was again disseminated with the signature page. Hannah said that six board members still had not submitted their signatures acknowledging the policy.

Barbara compiled a new board list which was also disseminated. The asterisk next to a name indicates membership in the Executive Committee. The asterisk was omitted next to Kathy’s name.

**DEMOCRACY PROJECT**

Judy reported on the efforts of the Democracy Project with a view towards a possible coalition. The Democracy Project is run by New Mexico First and is made up of two committees. The first committee’s task is to get candidates to sign on to Candidate Principles for Trusted Elections; *“I respect the checks and balances defined in the United States Constitution, and I support the electoral processes that protect the freedoms, liberties, and opportunities assured by our democratic institutions and norms. Elections must be conducted according to the rule of law – in a transparent, unbiased, and secure process.”*

This committee also seeks to get candidates to be guided by the following principles: *Honest Process (cooperate with election officials, adhere to rules and regulations, and refrain from knowingly propagating falsehoods about the electoral process); Civil Campaign (encourage a peaceful election atmosphere during pre-election, polling, counting, and post-election periods. Denounce any attempt to intimidate, harass, threaten, or incite violence against opponents, their supporters, and election workers); Secure Voting (respect voters’ freedom to exercise their lawful rights to register and vote, free from interference, obstruction, or intimidation); Responsible Oversight (encourage political parties and others to train poll-watchers on the election process and appropriate roles and behaviors, responsibilities, and obligations); and Trusted Outcomes (make claims of election irregularities in accordance with the law and acknowledge the legitimacy of the outcomes after the results have been certified and all contestations decided).*

The second committee, of which Hannah and Judy are members, is tasked with educating the public on how to engage in the election process, including poll watching, ballot counting and verification, being part of the canvassing and certifying of an election.

Judy said that PBS will be doing a 60-second piece on the Democracy Project. Common Cause is already a partner. Hannah wanted a vote from the board on joining this coalition, and Judy sees no downside to this. We would be required to help with joint activities including PSAs. Hannah would be our liaison.

Meredith moved that we join the Democracy Project coalition and Barbara seconded this motion. All voted in favor. Meredith asked to see coalition guidelines if any exist. Dick reminded the group that we are not required to endorse everything that an individual coalition does.

**ED FUND UPDATE**

Suzanne reported that the Ed Fund board is currently made up of Hannah, Suzanne, Kim Sorenson, Jody Larson, and Karen Wentworth. They meet only a couple of times per year. The SOS requires a certain number of members and she asked for at least one more volunteer. Meredith volunteered.

The Ed Fund currently has a balance of $953.50 and Hannah is expecting a $5,000 grant from the Thornburg Foundation. As previously reported, we now have 501(c)(3) status. Suzanne filed the required report with the SOS. The IRS has not yet processed all the necessary paperwork, so she has been unable to file required reports with the IRS or Attorney General. The accountant for the Santa Fe League has filed for an extension.

**JEDI**

Rebecca Á reported on the draft Mentorship Program developed by JEDI. There were a few minor changes made to the previously submitted draft. JEDI expects this to be a pilot project at the state level, rather than with local Leagues. Eileen said that one of the changes made was the addition of the language “Attend a political event together” under possible topics for activities. Meredith said this statement is problematic for board members to attend political events. Rebecca Á had no issue with changing that language to “non-partisan political event.” Rebecca Á then moved to approve the Mentorship Program as written, with this language change. Meredith seconded the motion.

Barbara asked what the next step would be. Kathy responded that it is like a program or coalition, and it could be used by other Leagues to set up their own mentorship programs. All voted in favor, except for Barbara, who abstained.

JEDI also drafted a proposed Land Acknowledgement which was requested by the board at the last meeting. Barbara submitted an alternative statement to the board via email, which not everyone received timely. Barbara’s version omits the term “unceded ancestral lands” in favor of “ancestral Native American lands.” Eileen suggested this go back to JEDI for review, but Judy said without the unceded lands language she would vote no. During the subsequent discussion, Rebecca Á agreed to change the word “pledge” in JEDI’s original statement in favor of the word “commit.”

Eileen then moved to approve the following Land Acknowledgement statement:

*The League of Women Voters of New Mexico acknowledges that we are on unceded ancestral lands. We recognize these First Peoples were displaced. With humility, we recognize and respect all Indigenous Peoples, their histories, and their ties to this land. Our continual work attempts to repair inequities caused by historic appropriation of land. We commit to have meaningful and respectful relationships with sovereign Indigenous nations and tribal communities. Let us keep this knowledge present as we proceed.* Dick seconded this motion. All voted in favor except Barbara, who voted no, and Becky, who abstained. Where this statement goes now is still to be determined. Rebecca Á suggested it should be more internal than external and it should be read at the beginning of board meetings. Eileen would like to see it posted on our website and Meredith agreed. No decision was made.

The JEDI report also noted that one of the UNM law students identified in the previously reported recruitment survey joined LWVCNM. Four other students not identified in the survey also joined in recent months. The increase in student membership may be due in part to the revised, more streamlined process for students attempting to join the League. JEDI noted, however, that it may be worthwhile to follow up with the law students who expressed interest in joining but have not done so.

**NM LISTENS**

According to Eileen’s report, NM Listens began with a grant proposal submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and awarded to the New Mexico Humanities Council (NMHC) to work in collaboration with the LWVNM. The yearlong grant under the auspices “A More Perfect Union” ends September 30, 2022. NM Listens increases our capacity to facilitate, educate, learn, and advocate with an ongoing commitment to civil dialogue among diverse people and groups throughout the state. At Hannah’s request, Eileen and Meredith propose that NM Listens be an official and ongoing LWVNM project.

During the last year, participants in Santa Fe and SNM learned ways of listening to diverse people and groups. Discussions focused on how our democracy is working and how it can be strengthened. Statewide webinars, including Missing and Murdered Indigenous People, provided learning opportunities for the public to hear experts discuss topics that rarely get discussed in depth. The proposal suggests the need for some funding for training for facilitators, honoraria, printing, travel, translation, site rental, and videography. Meredith added that the NM Listens project builds on our core values of promoting democracy. The proposal would provide a “tool kit” for all local Leagues, but it would be up to each League to decide how they would carry it out. This is not a formal request for funds.

Ann suggested the group write up some examples of the work they have done. Judy liked the model used in SNM which focused more on listening than was done in Santa Fe. Kathy suggested any feedback be provided to Eileen so she can update the proposal to bring back to the board at the next meeting.

**SPENT NUCLEAR FUEL**

Karen submitted a written report in which she reviewed the draft Nuclear Issues Study Proposal during the June 2022 LWVUS Convention. An alternative and broader Energy Study Proposal was drafted by another League but, because of issues with LWVCA and LWVPA bylaws, there is no opportunity for revising the LWVUS position during the 2024 Convention.

The US DOE distributed the results of the Consent-Based Siting for SNF Consolidated Interim Storage Facilities. LWVNM addressed this request for public comment and results were distributed to the NM SNF Storage Safety Committee for consideration.

In July 2022, legislation was proposed banning imports of Russian uranium due to the invasion of Ukraine. The United States is dependent on Russian conversion and enrichment for reactor fuel. Russia also provides 50 percent of world enrichment capability. Another bill addressed Low Enriched Uranium used by existing nuclear power plants required for advanced reactors which minimize spent nuclear fuel.

The New Mexico Interim Radioactive and Hazardous Materials Committee met in Clovis on August 5 during which railcar transportation safety and transport cask design was addressed.

Since Karen’s report was submitted, she has learned that DOE is now offering an opportunity for public organizations and private groups to bid on a portion of $16 million to coordinate and facilitate public meetings on Consent-Based Siting for SNF. Up to 10 organizations will be chosen to facilitate these meetings and identify communities of interest.

**STUDIES UPDATE**

Suzanne had no updates regarding the Judicial Selection study.

Rebecca Á had no updates to the Tribal Law study.

**VOTER SERVICES**

Judy is very pleased to have the funds needed to pay for the services of her “wingman” Maia Pugh. Maia will soon move on from working on the Voter Guide to social media and publicity. Voter Guides have been prepared for the 12 counties with large Native American populations. CNM is taking care of tribal lands in Bernalillo, Sandoval, and Valencia counties. That leaves distribution needed to the remaining counties and to the pueblos. There is a man in McKinley County who delivers all voting information to tribal areas in Cibola, San Juan, Otero, and Luna counties. Judy may spend money to mail Voter Guides to other areas, but she will need to know where and to whom they would be sent. A road trip may also be in her future.

Vote411 should go live on or around October 5 or 6. All candidates have been invited to participate but only about 50 percent have responded thus far. The group attempts to track down addresses for bounced emails and to send reminders to candidates to answer the questions. Judy is hoping for more radio publicity and other exposure for areas that do not have local Leagues.

**LOCAL LEAGUE REPORTS**

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

**ANNOUNCEMENTS, INITIATIVES, AND OTHER BUSINESS**

Dick reported that the litigation arm of LWVUS gave us permission to offer support to the Navajo Nation in their lawsuit on redistricting in San Juan County. He does not know if they will want our support.

The deadline for *La Palabra* is October 1, 2022.

The next board meeting is scheduled for November 19, 2022, and it will be held at the Socorro Public Library and via Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Written by Rebecca Chaiken (September 28, 2022)

Edited by Barbara Calef (September 30, 2022)