**League of Women Voters of New Mexico**

**Board Meeting Minutes**

**July 15, 2023**

**Via Zoom**

**Board Members Present**

Kathy Brook, Co-President

Hannah Burling, Co-President and Ed Fund President

Barbara Calef, Second Vice President

Rebecca Chaiken, Secretary

Kim Sorensen, Treasurer and Ed Fund Secretary/Treasurer

Dick Mason, Voting and Elections

Akkana Peck, Action Chair and Webmaster

Meredith Machen, Projects

Edwina Jaramillo, Voter Services

Ann LePage, Women and Gender Issues

Karen Douglas, Nuclear Issues

Donna Sandoval, LWVCNM President

Felicia Orth, LWVLA President

Kathe Kanim, LWVSNM Co-President

Heather Balas, Director at Large

**Call to Order and Introductions**

Kathy called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m. All members introduced themselves and explained their position with the LWVNM.

**Approval of Agenda and Approval of Minutes**

Hannah noted two additions to the agenda. Meredith moved that the amended agenda be approved, and Donna seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

Akkana moved to approve the April 30, 2023, board meeting minutes and Meredith seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

One spelling correction was noted in the Convention minutes. Barbara moved to approve the corrected April 30, 2023, Convention minutes and Meredith seconded this motion. All voted in favor.

**Co-Presidents’ Reports**

Hannah reported that she and Kathy attended the LWVUS Council meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada, between June 22 and June 25, 2023. The new dues structure, which was approved at Convention last year, was discussed. Hannah noted that this remains a confusing issue. What is known is that the average 12 percent of PMP the local Leagues previously received will be increased to 20 percent. The recommended level of dues will be $75, and the minimum dues will become $20. Each member will pay what they can. Over the next three years, the LWVUS will ensure that any local League that loses funds because of this new dues structure will be made whole. LWVUS speculates that many local Leagues will initially lose money because they assume that many members will pay only the minimum dues. Both Hannah and Kathy disagree with this assessment. LWVUS is in the process of sending spreadsheets with financial estimates to each League. New Mexico has become a Beta site for this as Kathy is reviewing the figures.

Hannah also mentioned that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion was a topic of discussion at Council and New Mexico is leading the pack in some areas.

Kathy reported that the other main agenda item at Council was the LWVUS plan for a “moon shot” – a dedicated effort to pursue the elimination of the Electoral College. This plan was compared to suffrage and civil rights, and a decades-long fight is expected. The first step during the next decade will be the focus on the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact [an agreement among a group of states and the District of Columbia to award all their electoral votes to whichever presidential ticket wins the overall popular vote. The Compact is designed to ensure that the candidate who receives the most votes nationwide is elected president]. In 2019, New Mexico legislators voted to join this Compact. Neither Kathy nor Hannah is clear what this means to LWVNM.

Heather added that this Compact is an end-run around the Electoral College, which will take decades to eliminate. The organization she works for has been working towards a top two proportional allocation approach. This would not eliminate the Electoral College but would reduce the likelihood that a candidate could win the election without winning the popular vote. Heather also anticipates the Interstate Compact to be challenged as unconstitutional.

Kathy noted that she received Directions to the Board at Convention. Three members asked for materials to be provided in advance of Convention, and there were a couple of requests for more transparency in the budget.

At the end of the meeting, Kathy clarified the dues issue. Her understanding is that there will be a central electronic location for paying dues. The suggested amount will be $75, and the minimum acceptable amount is $20. Beyond that, each member will pay what they are comfortable paying. Local Leagues can still have a recommended dues amount. Dues will be divvied up as follows: 20 percent will go to local Leagues, 33 percent will go to LWVUS, and 47 percent will go to each state League. This new structure is expected to be rolled out in 2024. The funds will flow instantly in the three directions, with no need to make transfers. Local Leagues will no longer be in the business of paying LWVUS, which is now working on selecting vendors for this new process. Kathy added that LWVUS has calculated that 96 percent of state Leagues will end up with more funds, and 73 percent of local Leagues will end up with more funds. LWVUS will ensure that no League suffers a loss in dues revenue in the first few years.

**Treasurer’s Report**

The Treasurer's Report shows an adjusted net loss for the 2022-2023 fiscal year to be $8,084.06. Total revenues from May 1 to July 15 were $2,359.70 and no operating expenses were incurred. The Wells Fargo account has an ending balance of $36,282.76.

Following a question by Meredith, Kim clarified that no LWVNM funds will be transferred to the Ed Fund, and Hannah said that future Make Democracy Work grants will go directly to the Ed Fund.

Kathy asked that the lumps of funds contained in the Treasurer’s Report be named, to make them easier to discuss.

Kim added that the $15,000 LWVUS grant received in 2022 has a current balance of $4,081.04. The bulk of the grant funds were spent on the Native American Voter Guide and Get Out the Vote videos.

The LWVNM 2022-2023 Final Report was sent via email during this meeting. Kathy suggested that any questions about this report be sent to Kim via email.

**Action Committee**

***Action Report***

Akkana reviewed the Action Report in which it was noted that an educational session on the legislative interim committees was held on June 21. This was recorded and is available on our website. Attendees learned about the different interim committees and what topics they cover. Over the next few months, Action Committee members will monitor some of these committees. On October 12 from 10:00 to noon, there will be an educational event on budget and taxes. Weekly Action Zooms will begin in either December or January.

The dates for next year’s legislative session and our advocacy events are as follows:

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| January 2 – January 12 | Legislation may be pre-filed |
| January 6 | Advocacy Workshop (10 to noon) |
| January 11 | Legislative Prep for league members (via Zoom) |
| January 16 | Opening Day at the Legislature |
| January 24 | LWVNM Reception |
| January 25 | League Day at the Legislature (redistricting and budget) |
| January 31 | Deadline for Introduction |
| February 15 | Legislative Session ends at noon |
| March 6 | Legislation not acted upon by Governor is pocket-vetoed |

***Redistricting Report***

Hannah reviewed the Redistricting Report. On July 5, the New Mexico Supreme Court ruled that Republican claims of partisan gerrymandering can proceed under a legal standard proposed by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan. This has given a new momentum to our redistricting work. Several League members and Fair Districts New Mexico Project Coordinator Kathleen Burke have since met to explore the next steps on the way to a fairer redistricting process in New Mexico. A press release was issued which led to some earned media (KUNM and New Mexico in Focus) and LWVUS has posted this on their website and released on Twitter.

Representative Natalie Figueroa was awarded the LWVNM 2023 Making Democracy Work award. She has worked to expand broadband access throughout New Mexico, and worked across the aisle on redistricting, modernizing the legislature, and open elections.

Heather noted that the ruling on redistricting is very exciting. New Mexico will be the first state to apply Justice Kagan’s standards, but it is unclear whether the judge in Clovis will have the data necessary to apply that standard. Heather added that her organization, Election Reformers Network, has received an emergency grant to compile a national research team. An *amicus* brief will be needed to provide the necessary data. LWVUS, as well as Common Cause, may be asked to sign on to this brief. Jeremy Farris has offered to work on this issue *pro bono*, but he needs permission from the Ethics Commission first.

Meredith said that she attended a LWVUS meeting on litigation, and a team will be offered for assistance on an *amicus* brief. Hannah has also been in touch with our LWVUS litigation liaison, Celina Stewart. Dick wants to get the ACLU involved, and Meredith suggested that AAUW would also sign on. Heather will be working on lining up support.

***Voting and Elections Report***

Dick reported that Judy is working regularly with a group involved in modernizing the legislature.

Dick’s report reflects that, despite repeated requests from LWVNM, the Courts, Corrections, and Justice (CCJ) interim committee did not put voting and elections (including redistricting) on their work plan. The Indian Affairs interim committee did include voting and elections on their work plan but did not include a presentation by LWVNM on redistricting.

Representative Rubio will sponsor a House Joint Memorial requesting that the Legislative Council create a Government and Elections Subcommittee to CCJ. The Secretary of State will support this and will also host a task force on redistricting.

**Program**

In Judy’s absence, her report notes that the Tribal Law Study is being continued for the purpose of conducting a few interviews and preparing the full report. Judy is pursuing an interview with a member of the Law and Indigenous Peoples Program at UNM Law School, as well as interviews with a member of the Navajo Nation and one of the pueblos. Jody and Barbara have offered to help and Rebecca Álvarez may be available for some work as well.

Karen submitted a detailed report on the LWVNM Nuclear Issues Study. Four tasks of the study include: 1) summarize the current contribution nuclear energy provides as both a baseload and a greenhouse gas free source for domestic/international energy production; 2) identify deterrents to nuclear energy expansion and any proven and effective remedies; 3) consider the current U.S. energy situation and domestic nuclear plant status including closures with related impacts on states; and 4) evaluate newer advanced reactor concepts with enhanced safety features and efficiency with related implementation status. Unfortunately, since the study inception, several staff members have resigned, leaving only six current participants. Karen’s report includes a proposed timeline of events, but she noted that the staffing shortages need to be addressed first.

Hannah submitted a draft proposal on how to initiate a state study. Proposers of a study will be asked to submit a short description of the study including its extent, limits, and objectives, to the LWVNM board at least 72 hours in advance of the March meeting before Convention. Three questions are to be considered. Are there members available to work on the study? Is the problem one that can be addressed by governmental action? Is the League likely to make a difference to the issue? The proposed studies will be published in the spring issue of *La Palabra*. If a study is not recommended by the board, it will be listed in *La Palabra* as “not recommended” and a majority vote on the first day of Convention is required for the study to be placed on the agenda for discussion on the second day. Barbara pointed out that LWVNM already has a policy on how to conduct a state study. She offered to make a diagram of the process. Following a question by Akkana, Barbara clarified that a study cannot be presented at Convention for a vote without first going to the LWVNM board.

**Governance**

Our bylaws require a ratification by the board of actions taken by the Executive Committee and by the board electronically between board meetings. On June 4, 2023, Barbara made a motion to the LWVNM Executive Committee to join the list of Associated Groups for New Mexico Open Elections. Kathy seconded this motion. There were four yes votes and the motion passed. Dick moved to ratify this vote and Meredith seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

On June 7, 2023, Edwina made an electronic motion to the LWVNM board to request funding from the LWVNM Education Fund for licensing fees in the amount of $3,200 for Vote411 for 2023 elections in the counties not covered by any of the four local Leagues. Donna seconded this motion and the motion passed unanimously. Felicia moved to ratify this vote and Akkana seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

On June 18, 2023, the LWVNM Executive Board voted to sign on to a letter to the Legislative Council Committee regarding conducting a study of staffing in terms of modernization of the legislature. Kathe moved to ratify this vote and Meredith seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

On June 29, 2023, Kathy made a motion to the LWVNM Executive Committee to present Representative Natalie Figueroa with the 2023 Making Democracy Work award. Barbara seconded this motion and the motion passed unanimously. Meredith moved to ratify this vote and Rebecca seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

At Convention, Ann offered to amend our bylaws to make them more user friendly, and Akkana offered to assist in this endeavor. Ann expressed her thanks to Akkana for her assistance. Ann presented a draft of the revised bylaws and indicated that most of the questions she and Akkana had have been answered. Ann asked for any further input to be submitted to her via email. Barbara said that she had a lot of corrections and offered to meet with Ann and Akkana in person. Ann responded that the entire process has been very stressful for her, and she asked instead for written corrections.

**Education Fund**

Hannah reported on the Education Fund (Ed Fund) and Kim provided the Treasurer’s Report. The Ed Fund board met on July 11, 2023, during which several topics were discussed. The fundraising group that met at the 2023 Convention, which has also met subsequently, is exploring focusing fundraising on 501(c)(3) development exclusively. The group felt that they should work with the Ed Fund, and not the LWVNM board. Meredith is reviewing the LWVNM fundraising and financial policies to see how this could be made to work.

The Ed Fund board also discussed the possibility of becoming an employer. Hannah’s report notes that to continue to attract funders and larger grants, it has been recognized that we will need a staffer, not a contractor, to lead Fair Districts for New Mexico. A hire would only be made if we had a grant to cover the expenses. The Ed Fund board is investigating what will be needed to become an employer. The original impetus to form an Ed Fund was the possibility of hiring staff for activating membership, fundraising, and social media.

Meredith is working on a list of projects that the Ed Fund is and will be undertaking. These projects include Vote411, the Native American Voter Guide, New Mexico Listens, and Fair Districts New Mexico, along with other voter educational programs including this year’s election integrity film.

In collaboration with the Democracy Project, we are again working on an election integrity film. This one will be filmed largely at the Secretary of State’s Election School for county clerks in August. Hannah, Janet, Edwina, and Jo Galván Nash are all working on this project. It is hoped that there will be enough film to stockpile for another film for the 2024 presidential election.

Kim reported that the Ed Fund’s account at Nusenda Credit Union received transfers totaling $17,329.43 from the previous account in Santa Fe (Thornburg IV) and from the account at Enterprise Bank, which was closed. Expenditures, mostly related to Thornburg, totaled $5,587.56. With the beginning balance of $10,000, the ending cash balance is $21,741.87. Together with outstanding checks totaling $4,184.93, the total Ed Fund balance is $25,926.80.

A $10,000 grant from New Mexico Voices for Children is expected soon, along with a $13,000 grant from LWVUS we are calling Make Democracy Work II, and a $5,000 discretionary Thornburg grant. A lengthy discussion on how this money should be spent ensued.

Hannah clarified that the Ed Fund exists to do the educational work of LWVNM. The Ed Fund board is in the process of developing procedures. Meredith will send out the guidelines used by LWVIL, which she said are the best she has seen. Kathy wants to encourage the development of guidelines/procedures that clarify the relationship between LWVNM and the Ed Fund. Dick concurred and indicated we need very defined procedures and guidelines. Kathe asked for greater clarity and noted that the concept makes her feel uncomfortable. Her main concern is having a small group of people (the Ed Fund board) making decisions on large amounts of money. Donna suggested that it is not clear what the Ed Fund funds would be used for.

Hannah described the Ed Fund as an associated or affiliated organization of LWVNM and she explained that the Ed Fund can pay for all voter education services previously paid for by LWVNM, such as translations and printing. Felicia suggested that funds such as this are common and that many organizations have both (c)(4) and (c)(3) functions. What is clear is that Ed Fund funds cannot be used for political advocacy. Hannah screen-shared the Ed Fund bylaws, which indicate that the Ed Fund board is to approve the disbursement and expenditure of funds for public education programs proposed by the LWVNM board. Kathy said that she still is not clear on how the linkages between LWVNM and the Ed Fund work. Hannah said we are working on how to avoid conflict and will present more, including on communication and transparency, at the LWVNM board meeting in September. Felicia clarified that the only entity from which the Ed Fund would entertain a request for funds would be the LWVNM board. Hannah confirmed this and added that the Ed Fund would not act as a grantor. Kathy has no conceptual problems with this but wants to know how the process will work.

**Fundraising**

Hannah reported that the new Fundraising Committee has met twice, and another meeting is scheduled for July 28. Because the focus will be on 501(c)(3) fundraising, the Committee has agreed to move this from a LWVNM function to an Ed Fund function. They are in the process of asking local Leagues (also (c)(3) organizations) if they would be willing to work together on Vote411 and its publicity. The Committee is also looking into ways the Ed Fund can support local Leagues with printing, database, subscriptions, tax preparation, and the like. As such, Hannah asked that the name of the Fundraising portfolio be changed to Development. Meredith made this motion and Dick seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

**Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI)**

The new chair of JEDI, Joanna Velasquez, submitted a report which indicated she was elected chair in March. Also in March, Joanna, Meredith, and Rebecca Álvarez finalized a draft of the JEDI chair description. The next JEDI meeting will be held in August, and Joanna has offered DEI training for LWVNM and the Ed Fund boards. She asked for possible dates.

Minor changes were suggested to the JEDI chair description submitted, including changing “ex officio” to “is not required to be a board member.” Hannah will rewrite the final portfolio description to be submitted for a vote at the board meeting in September.

**Voter Services**

Edwina submitted a list of possible candidate questions for upcoming state races that local Leagues will not cover. Edwina is trying to make sure the questions are unbiased and relate to candidates’ positions.

Dick moved that we approve the candidate questions as put forward and Meredith seconded this motion. A lengthy discussion followed.

Meredith suggested that there may be some limitations in terms of space, and Edwina asked if they had been prioritized in the past. Meredith also noted that not all questions would be needed in each county as their priorities may not be the same. Karen thought the questions were excellent, but she asked if they had been posed to the four local Leagues. Even though they write and approve their own questions, Karen thought it would be good to use these as a base. Akkana suggested that there is overlap in the submitted questions, and she suggested that they could be narrowed down. Kathy also thought there were too many questions, and they were too detailed. Rebecca liked the questions as written and did not think a narrowing down by the board was necessary.

Edwina noted that the list of questions she submitted were drafted by working closely with Judy and the questions were drafted based on Judy’s extensive experience. Kathy suggested that we are approving the list submitted, and that Edwina could prioritize if space was an issue.

Kathe noted that Edwina oversees all elections not covered by the local Leagues. There is a lot of merit to Meredith’s suggestion that candidates identify the issues important to their race. We cannot ask Edwina to find out what is important in the various counties. Akkana noted that asking six or seven questions may lead some candidates to not answer at all, and she suggested that we select perhaps four questions. Edwina asked the board to allow her and Judy to select those questions with the highest priority.

Dick withdrew his initial motion. He then moved that LWVNM approve Edwina’s list of questions, but the committee (made up of Edwina and Judy) may choose amongst those questions. Meredith seconded this motion. Meredith then offered a Friendly Amendment to allow the committee the authority to reword, combine, and shorten the questions. Dick accepted this Friendly Amendment. All voted in favor.

**Local League Reports**

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

**Announcements, Initiatives, and Other Business**

Meredith noted that there is a group of organizations in Santa Fe working on gun violence prevention and she will provide more information to the board in September. Dick said this should be a discussion for the Action Committee.

The next board meeting is scheduled for September 16, 2023. Because of technical issues we have experienced, Meredith moved that the next meeting be held via Zoom. Kathe seconded this motion, and all voted in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:19 p.m.

Written by Rebecca Chaiken (July 18, 2023)

Edited by Barbara Calef (July 18, 2023)