



La Palabra

The Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of New Mexico

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NATIONAL HEALTH CARE EXPERT TO SPEAK IN ALBUQUERQUE

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As part of the "By the People" national Deliberation Week, the League of Women Voters Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Education Fund is proud to present "Building a Better Health Care System," a public program. The featured speakers will be New Mexico Senator Dede Feldman and Dr. Henry E. Simmons, M.D., M.P.H., F.A.C.P., president of the National Coalition on Health Care. The event will be held October 29th, 1 to 3 p.m. at Smith Brasher Hall on the TVI Main Campus, 717 University Avenue in Albuquerque.

The Coalition is the nation's largest and most broadly representative alliance working to improve America's health care. Founded in 1990, non-profit, and rigorously non-partisan, the Coalition is comprised of almost 100 organizations, employing or representing about 150 million Americans, bringing together large and small businesses, the nation's largest labor, consumer, religious and primary care provider groups, and the largest health and pension funds. Distinguished leaders from academia, business, and government have also pledged their support. Honorary Co-Chairs are former Presidents George Bush, Gerald R. Ford, and Jimmy Carter. Co-Chairs are former Governor Robert D. Ray (R-IA) and former Congressman Paul G. Rogers (D-FL).

Members of the Coalition are united in the belief that we need--and can achieve--better, more affordable health care for all Americans. The membership supports the following principles as a framework for improving our nation's health care: Health care coverage for all; Cost management; Improvement of health care quality and safety; Equitable financing; Simplified administration

Dr. Simmons has held a variety of distinguished posts in both the public and private sectors. During the Nixon and Ford administrations, he served as deputy assistant secretary for health and as director of the Office of Professional Standards Review at the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), and as director of the Bureau of Drugs at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). President Reagan appointed him to the Grace Commission. Following his federal service, Dr. Simmons became a senior vice president at the J. Walter Thompson Company. Dr. Simmons has also held the posts of president and chief executive officer of the Hunterdon Medical Center, Flemington, New Jersey, senior vice president and director of the Health Care Division of Sears World Trade, Inc., and director of the Health and Medical Consulting Division at Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Company.

Dr. Simmons has been associated with numerous universities and medical centers across the country: visiting research professor at the George Washington University School of Business and Government; faculty member and consultant at Tufts New England Medical Center; professor at Rutgers University School of Medicine; assistant clinical professor of medicine at Georgetown University; associate professor at the George Washington University School of Medicine. He has testified before the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. Dr. Simmons has received frequent recognition for his services, including the FDA Award of Merit, the HEW Certificate of Merit, and the Annual Oliver Wendell Holmes Society Lectureship. He received his undergraduate and medical degrees at the University of Pittsburgh and a Master of Public Health from Harvard University.

For further information contact the LWV/ABC Education Fund at 505-884-8441.

The program is funded by McNeil/Lehrer Productions and the national LWV Education Fund.

Dick Mason, Co-Chair Action Committee

President's Message

The New Mexico State Fair is in full swing as I write, and the League of Women Voters of New Mexico (LWVNM) shares a table there with the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County League on September 23. We are registering voters and distributing our "Voters Key 2005." And smiling. What a great way to get to know Leaguers from around the state, meet the public, and further the cause of getting all eligible New Mexico voters to register. Maybe you'd like to be a participant next year. Since 2006 is an election year, we will require lots of help, so plan to volunteer a couple of hours on League Day at the Fair. Let your membership chair know that you are willing to serve.

The Action Committee has its first meeting for the 2006 Legislature this month. Though the short 30-day session is to be directed toward financial matters, other issues of League interest will be discussed. Your input is invited. Tell your concerns to your local League Action person. This committee plans our League Day at the Legislature and welcomes your participation. Exciting plans are afoot even now. Complete information in the Winter Edition of *La Palabra*.

Congratulations to the Las Cruces and A/BC Leagues who applied for and received money from LWVUS to conduct Health Care Reform forums during October 22-29, 2005. The

programs are part of the McNeil/Lehrer "By The People" annual projects. Information about the League forums will be reported by our Health Care Reform Committee members.

Thank you to the Los Alamos League for providing all leagues with study guides and programs to inform us about our two new study programs: (1) Sustainability and (2) the Death Penalty. Articles in this newsletter supplement that information. Your attention to these two topics is necessary so that we may consider developing positions for later action.

The Santa Fe League is requesting members who want to work on the Immigration study to contact them. This one-year study is scheduled for next year--organizing starts now. In addition, I thank the Santa Fe League for agreeing to host the 2006 LWVNM Council in May in Santa Fe. You'll hear more about that in the Spring issue of *La Palabra*.

Members-At-Large (MALs): a special word to you. If you are close enough to be able to attend programs at any of the four leagues (Albuquerque/Bernalillo County, Greater Las Cruces, Los Alamos, Santa Fe County), contact them if you'd like to meet members and hear what is being presented. Certainly think about attending League Day at the Legislature. We're planning something very special.

Marilyn Morgan

July 2005 Board Meeting Summary

Business

- * Ratified nomination of Elizabeth Best to the Board of Directors
- * Distributed "Impact on Issues" for 2004-2006
- * Reviewed LWVUS Council "Getting Started" information for new boards
- * Joined coalition with New Mexicans for Health Care Reform - Richard Mason, presenter
- * A/BC and GLC Health Care forums to receive help from Action Committee
- * Discussed Directions to the Board from 2005 State Convention
- * Formed sub-committee to review the budget committee selection process
- * Presentation about No Child Left Behind (NCLB) by Elizabeth Best

Announcements

- * LWVNM urges all Leagues to support "Sunshine Week" in March 2006
- * LWVUS President Kay Maxwell will visit New Mexico - date tba
- * LWVUS Convention in June 2006 will be in Minneapolis
- * LWVNM Council in May 2006 will be in Santa Fe

New! Natural Resources Subcommittee

As the new League state board member for **Natural Resources**, I invite all interested League members to join me in a state subcommittee on natural resources. The purposes of the subcommittee are to share information on regional and state natural resource issues/activities and to identify state legislation affecting natural resources and recommend whether the League's State Action committee should actively support or oppose the legislation during the legislative session

The subcommittee would meet via conference call every two months and may communicate more frequently during the legislative session.. To join, contact me, Beth Bardwell, 505-522-5065.

On the Web

Materials for the 2005-2006 LWVNM studies are on line at the **LWVNM web site www.lwvnm.org**. The new pages are linked at the top of the home page. The page for the Sustainability study includes the first three *La Palabra* articles along with all the links suggested in those articles and a few supplementary links. LWVNM's positions and bylaws and recent issues of *La Palabra* are posted on this site.

Three local leagues in New Mexico have websites, as follows:

- * **Albuquerque/Bernalillo County**, www.lwvabc.org. This website has a new look! Includes an on-line calendar, the "2005 Who's Who," and information about the upcoming city election.
- **Greater Las Cruces**, www.zianet.com/lwv/. Includes the current newsletter, the "Who's Who," and links to government sites and elected officials.
- **Los Alamos**, www.lwvlosalamos.org. Includes a calendar, recent newsletters, and our new non-partisan policy.

LEAGUE ACTIVITIES

LWVUS— See the LWVUS Council article in this issue.

Albuquerque/ Bernalillo County.

We are distributing 30,000 "Voters' Guides" for the October 4 municipal election. We are continuing to participate in forums for mayoral and city council candidates.

One proposition on the ballot is to amend the city charter to provide for public campaign financing. LWV/ABC has supported this amendment and has made a public statement that will be on a flyer to be distributed to the public. We have held one training session for voter registrars under the new voter registration regulations.

Our second alternative energy workshop will be held on Sept. 17, 10 AM - noon, at the clubhouse where the League office is located. Presenters are Craig O'Hare, special assistant for renewable energy to Governor Richardson, and Howard Stephens, retired engineer from Sandia National Laboratories.

We received a \$600 grant from LWVUS for a "By the People" community event. We will hold a forum entitled "Building a Better Health Care System" on Saturday, October 29, 1-3 PM, at TVI. Dede Feldman and Dr. Henry Simmons of the National Coalition on Health Care will speak.

LWV/ABC will have a booth for Women's Day at the State Fair, September 23.

Our website has been redesigned. Check us out at www.lwvabc.org.
Diane Goldfarb, President

Greater Las Cruces.

Since August we have been very busy, and this fall will be even busier. Marjorie Burr and Vicki Simons wrote and were awarded a grant of \$600 from "By the People" to host a forum on Health Issues. It will be televised by our local PBS station and in conjunction with the McNeil/ Lehrer program. The forum is scheduled for October 24.

The Las Cruces city charter revision will be voted on in the November election. In the City Council chambers on September 15, 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. we will host a public forum on the changes. It will be televised.

Positions on the ballot will be city councilors and one magistrate judge. We expect to publish the "Voters' Guide" in a local paper and we will hold a candidate forum for the public on October 20, at Munson Center.

As to our monthly meetings, we hold a breakfast meeting one month and a pot luck at a member's home the next month. This allows us more time for discussion with our speakers and our working members have an opportunity to participate without juggling their work schedules.

We are losing our VP, Kathy Mathews. She will be relocating to Albuquerque. A loss for our league, but lucky for Albuquerque/Bernalillo County.

Our two study groups, Election Procedures/Voter Turnout and Local Issues, continue to pursue those topics.

We continue to gain members. As to fund-raising, although Christina Little wrote a wonderful fund-raising letter this year, follow-up donations are not happening as quickly as we hoped.

Connie Lee, President

Los Alamos.

The Los Alamos League sponsored a well-attended forum on the ballot issues for new Civic Center in Los Alamos on August 18. The mail-in ballots with two questions, one on a bond issue to provide capital construction money and one about raising the GRT to cover some of the operating costs, are due by September

13. Support for the measures was voiced by the president of Citizen Support for the Civic Center, while the opposition was represented by project critic Martin Gursky. The panel also included one of the project architects and Los Alamos County's CFO. Even the lengthy Q&A period that followed, with the League's usual strict rules limiting the length of both questions and responses, was insufficient to accommodate all the questions from the audience. The event was well covered by the local newspapers.

Unit meetings for the two LWVNM studies and our annual membership event are coming up this fall. This year's membership event will be held at the home of membership chair Jeffrey Howell. The speaker will be the new director of the county's Community Development Department. Members of the League are encouraged to bring guests who might be interested in joining or in learning more about the League. Members of other NM Leagues are welcome.

The League is planning a forum on the structure of County Government in November, co-sponsored by the Los Alamos Historical Society. A panel will review the debates and incompletely-resolved questions that accompanied the original writing of the County Charter and a Charter Review Committee's work a decade ago. Coincidentally, in July the County Council invited the League to hold a town hall on a new Charter review. We hope to do this in the spring, applying some of what we learned from professional facilitator Carl Moore at our board retreat in June.

Katherine Campbell, President

Santa Fe County.

As summer ends so begin the activities of the Santa Fe County League. With our calendar nearly finalized, we look forward to an interesting year. We will start with a Conversation and Coffee event intended to bring our members together and introduce potential members to the League. Various municipal officials have been invited as special guests.

New this year is a non-fiction book club focused on politics, social issues, history, and biographies of public figures. We plan to expand our Conversation and Coffee gathering to scheduled breakfasts with local leaders and personalities later in the year. As a special event, we have arranged with HBO and the Santa Fe Film Festival to have two showings of "Iron Jawed Angels" on February 13, 2006, to bring more visibility to the League and commemorate its anniversary. With the legislative session and local elections (in March), hopefully the importance of voting, especially for women, will get attention. Since the film must be shown with no admission charges, we will be considering some creative ways to cover our expenses and raise additional funds.

Jane Gaziano, President

Sustainability Requires an Economic Paradigm Shift

Faced with the litany of ecological limitations, many individuals and whole cultures retreat into simple denial. They tell us that there is no alternative but to continue in the current direction, assuming that the market and technology will solve the short-term problems, leaving the long-term problems to be solved by future generations. The trouble with this approach, as the last article in this series attempted to show, is that **the future is now** (not to mention, of course, that this attitude is not at all League-like)! So in the final two articles of this series we sample the proposals for alternative paths forward.

An economy is sustainable only if it complies with the principles of ecology. A sustainable economy must respect the capacity of the ecosystem on which it depends, both for material resources and for the recycling of waste materials. It must acknowledge that ecosystems provide not only goods but also indispensable services.

Ecological economists describe three objectives for an economic system:

- allocating resources among competing uses,
- distributing income among participants, and
- optimizing the scale of the economy relative to the ecosystem within which it is embedded.

Allocation and distribution are familiar concepts from traditional economic theory. Markets do an excellent job of allocating resources within the constraints imposed by society regarding the distribution of income and more generally goals of economic activity. Without such constraints there are an infinite number of mathematically optimal solutions to the allocation problem, some of which lead to highly undesirable distributions of income. For this reason many governments, some economists, and organizations such as LWV recognize the need for society to constrain the operations of markets.

Virtually no government and only a handful of economists and organizations have tackled the problem of scale. The scale of the economy is the main problem today. The economy is no longer small relative to the Earth, as implicitly assumed by traditional economic theory. The March 2005 global report of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (www.millenniumassessment.org) estimates that almost two-thirds of the natural systems that support life on Earth are being degraded by human pressure. As Herman Daly as pointed out in *Beyond Growth* (1996, p.13), "we must distinguish growth (quantitative increase by assimilation or accretion of materials) from development (qualitative improvement, realization of potential.)" The ecosystem has developed, not grown, into the marvelously complex web that supports life.

Creating a sustainable economy will require rapid change in both economic theory and practice. Forward-looking individuals, organizations and even governments are beginning to recognize opportunities for innovation, employment and investment. The economy must be redesigned so that it produces little or no waste. Eco-efficiency, doing more with less, falls short of the fundamental change that is needed.

After "the next industrial revolution" (the title of an article by William McDonough and Michael Braungart in "Atlantic Monthly," October, 1998), industrial products will be designed so that, after serving the purpose for which they were created, they will provide nourishment for something new. Biological materials, including packaging, will return to the organic cycle to be consumed by microorganisms, fungi, and other decomposers. Durable goods such as computers and vehicles will be designed so that most of their components can be reused, others can be extracted and remanufactured. Customers will purchase the services of such products, rather than the products. An industrial park where residual products are exchanged among a group of about 20 projects has been constructed at Kalundborg, Denmark (www.symbiosis.dk), .

Energy use needs major overhaul on both the supply and demand sides. The ten-point plan of the Apollo Alliance (see www.apolloalliance.org) calls for major investment in existing technologies- more efficient and less polluting buildings, automobiles, and manufacturing, smart urban growth, and multi-modal transportation. The Alliance claims that their proposal will add over three million good jobs to the American economy while producing substantial energy savings and reducing carbon emissions.

The World Energy Modernization Plan (WEMP) (new.heatisonline.org) makes similar claims for its plan to facilitate a rapid transition to climate-friendly modes of power generation worldwide.

A common theme among economic visionaries is the need to reverse the trend towards a single global economy.

The Irish economist Richard Douthwaite explains that globalization destroys the local environmental and economic signals that warned communities that their behavior was unsustainable, while rewarding those that consume the Earth's resources most rapidly (www.feasta.org/documents/review2/douthwaite.pdf). The sustainable economy will not be a single, uniform global system but a much more complex network of production and trading systems. Basic needs--food, fiber, shelter, energy--will be met within bioregions whenever possible.

Only rare essential materials and products with a high technological content will be traded on larger scales. Distributed renewable electricity generation will supply most energy needs, together, of course, with major improvements in efficiency of use. Construction will be adapted to use local materials, rather than the current one-size-fits-all frame or steel construction, and buildings will require little or no energy-intensive climate control. Far more diversity will exist in transportation, both locally and interregionally.

The benefits of the required transition, in addition to enabling us to live within a thriving ecosystem, are many. The transition will require much innovation, opportunities that are already being exploited by the rest of the world while the U.S. lags behind. It will provide opportunities to invest constructively, rather than solely for speculative gain. And most important, it will increase local employment for those who are unable to find meaningful work in today's economy.

Continued on next page

LWVUS Council, June 11-13 2005:
Highlights Report

The Council, a mini-convention with only two delegates from each state, meets every other year. This year, 132 registrants attended from 47 states.

These three days were informative from beginning to end. Interactive workshops, with members working in groups of 10-12, gave Marilyn Morgan and me plenty of time to meet colleagues and hear about ideas and activities from Leagues around the nation, including Alaska and Hawaii. As a former teacher, I was mightily impressed by the skill, enthusiasm, and aplomb of the young LWVUS staff members who conducted these sessions. First class!

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS:

- ☞ Plenary Session Address on Sunday by Gracia Hillman, Chair, Election Assistance Commission
- ☞ Finding out that only one-third of the LWVUS budget needs are met by the Per Member Payment (The rest comes from donations, of course.)
- ☞ Saturday evening's Networking sessions with delegates from other "small" states
- ☞ Sunday's Banquet Speaker, David Gergen, speech writer for 4 U.S. Presidents (and watching LWVUS President Kay Maxwell "play straight woman" for him at the end of his speech)
- ☞ Hearing one delegate from each state summarize that League's work in a two-minute speech. The time-keeper was vicious -- and Marilyn's report was both brief and thorough.

FOCUS ON ELECTION REFORM

I was especially eager to attend this panel discussion on Monday afternoon because of the on-going efforts of our own LWV/GLC Committee on Election Procedures/Voter Turnout. (Polly Evans, Chair; Johnnie Aldrich, Helen Buggert, Jeanne Culbertson, Marnie Leverett, Betty Pool, LaJune Smith, Donna Tate).

Artfully chaired by Mary Wilson, LWVUS Regional Liaison from Albuquerque, this overflow session featured panelists from the recently controversial states of Georgia and Ohio,.

and from Travis County (Austin), Texas. The Ohio delegate pointed out that their League is convinced that little, if any, fraud occurred in the Ohio election of '04. The main problems were caused by incompetence at the county level, the inadequate number of machines, especially in the inner cities, and primarily by the overwhelming number of people registering voters. Sound familiar? One of the 10 recommendations made by this League for election reform is the reinstatement of Election Day Registration! Again, provisional ballots were a major source of confusion and confusion.

Georgia's delegate focused on that state's new requirement that all voters present a photo ID at the polls. The League there is strongly opposed, and a two-page, single-spaced document listed the reasons for maintaining that entitled "Requiring Photo Identification at the Polls Is Bad for Georgia." According to the reporting delegate, the Georgia law is not discriminatory; "this legislation [will]...impact voters of both parties, of all races, and in every part of the state."

From Travis County, Texas, we were given an eight-page, single-spaced report on the '04 election procedures. The report details the system used and the League's assessment of whether procedures were properly followed. Travis County has established a Citizen Oversight Committee to observe Election procedures, and Leaguers are, apparently, the backbone of this committee. Travis County, with 261 voting precincts, seems to work like a well-oiled machine. Difficulties, though, are caused by the vagueness of some of the Help America Vote Act provisions, an issue on which LWVUS President Kay Maxwell has addressed the Election Assistance Commission.

I have merely summarized almost two hours of presentation and discussion here. If you wish to read report copies or obtain details, please call me.

Thank you, LWVNM and GLC, for giving me the privilege of attending LWVUS Council of 2005. It was a truly energizing experience!

Johnnie Aldrich, Membership

Sustainability.... continued

What does all this have to do with the League, which, by and large, is concerned with actions that can be legislated or executed by governments? Government has essential roles to play, both in ceasing to promote harmful practices and systems through misguided subsidies and in encouraging more sustainable practices through taxes and market-guiding incentives. Markets must be regulated to preserve resources for future generations and to reduce the concentration of wealth. Producers must internalize ecological costs and pass them on to consumers so that market prices provide correct signals to consumers. The League has an opportunity on all levels, from local to national, to make its voice heard as a proponent of a rapid transition to a sustainable economy.

Questions:

✓ **Should the League** strengthen the "maximum protection of the environment" clause in its national position to make it clear that this requirement may not be overruled by short-term economic considerations? ✓ **Should the NM League** reevaluate its position on taxation, promoting ecological tax reform, and augment this with strong positions against the use of tax money to subsidize economic development that does not take ecological constraints into account? ✓ **Should the national League** be supporting the expansion of international trade as a goal? ✓ **Should LWVNM's** economic development position make a clear distinction between development and growth?
LWVLA Sustainability Committee, Gale Zander Barlow, Chair

Membership: Visibility, Publicity, Involvement

In every League meeting that I have attended during the past year, at both state and local levels, the need for new members is a topic for discussion (usually with no results). I suspect that the same is true of every one of our NM Leagues. Certainly it was among the topics for discussion at LWVUS Council in June.

Declining membership in established organizations has been a national phenomenon for at least the past 10 years. My intention here is not to explore the reasons for this social reality of our times, but to fulfill a direction from our NM Board of Directors to suggest ways that we might increase our membership despite the trend.

VISIBILITY is essential. Because of the prestige of LWV among politicians and the politically "savvy," it's too easy to rest on our laurels and assume that everybody knows who and what we are.

When I first arrived in Las Cruces, a recent retiree, I was eager to get started on more direct "political" involvement than had been possible when I was a working taxpayer. Upon arrival, I called both the state and local offices of my favorite political party to volunteer. I received no reply from either office. But while I was awaiting those calls during my first months in NM, I read two letters to the editor of our local newspaper stating the League position on current controversial issues in the area. In both cases, I agreed with the position and began to think of the League as an organization where I could effectively use my energies.

Why not, then, designate two or three members who will write letters with League sponsorship so that our name is on the editorial pages at least once a month?

Furthermore, NO public event should be without a League information booth or table. Our NM League and the Albuquerque local had representatives, for example, at the State Fair on a designated day in Albuquerque last month. Two major "farmer's markets" occur weekly in the Las Cruces area. We of GLC could/should have a representative there at least once a month. Such public gatherings also could be voter registration opportunities.

Why not ask each League's membership chair to head a committee that would organize volunteers for such events?

PUBLICITY INCREASES VISIBILITY. The LWV of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, increased its membership from 47 to over 250 from 1998-2004. How? The Board organized a monthly "Lunch with a Leader" meeting that included a presentation by high-ranking local officials on some issue of LOCAL importance. They announced these meetings with PAID advertisements in the local papers. The regular time of the meeting was very carefully chosen so that it did not conflict with other regularly scheduled gatherings like city/county council meetings or luncheon meetings of other organizations. League members received a discount for each meal, so that membership had a direct financial advantage. The results were not instant, in terms of membership growth, but they have been steady. The LWVBR President credits the wide circulation of announcements about the meeting for the success of the "lunch program." The event became an "in" thing to do in Baton

Rouge and was frequently reported by the local media after the event.

Why not, then, designate funds for more extensive publicity than most of us have done in the past?

Finally, A-S-M!--i.e., we must **Actively Seek Members**.

LWV Massachusetts is assembling a Membership Manual which will eventually be available to all local and state membership chairs. One focus of the manual will be on sample invitation-to-join letters to send to "elected officials, legislators, PTO members and others in similar groups." Apparently, the MA League has had considerable success with this technique.

(If your League already has written such letters, please send copies to me and to the Massachusetts League -- Robin Rich, Asst. Exec. Director, LWVMA, 133 Portland St., Boston MA 02114.)

"Each One Bring One" (apologies to literacy guru Frank Laubach) is, without doubt, the most effective membership growth technique. If each member personally invited one other person to a League activity or meeting, we'd see membership growth -- I guarantee it! For example: our own Los Alamos League holds a "membership event" every September. Members are encouraged to bring a friend to a private home to hear a speaker and to share desserts, coffee, and conversation.

Note that every one of these suggestions depends upon **MEMBERSHIP INVOLVEMENT**. Neither the Membership Chair nor the President nor the Board members can single-handedly increase our member rolls. The "active seeking," then, is not only among those outside our ranks but also among the insiders.

More on that topic in the next edition! Meanwhile, if your League has membership-growth techniques or activities that have been particularly successful, I'd like to hear about them.

Johnnie Aldrich, Membership

LWVNM Death Penalty Study

At its May 2005 Convention, LWVNM accepted a proposal for a one-year state study leading to a state position on the death penalty. The following local League unit meetings will be devoted to this study during 2005-2006:

- ✓ Los Alamos: September 29, 2005
- ✓ Albuquerque/Bernalillo County: October 13, 17, 18 and 19, 2005
- ✓ Santa Fe County: November 7 and 9, 2005
- ✓ Greater Las Cruces: January 11, 2006

A study guide and bibliography prepared by Barbara Calef are available on the State League website, www.lwvnm.org. If you do not have internet access, please call State League office at 505-884-8441 to request a hard copy. Please read the study guide before your unit meeting.

Barbara Calef

Education: Design for the Future

The League Board of Directors was asked whether the League should remain silent, oppose or support the consideration of "intelligent design" in science classes in the public schools of New Mexico. The Board decided that because there is no specific statement about this issue in LWVNM positions, it would not be possible to take action relating to it. However, observing that teaching about religions in public schools is an issue that should be understood and discussed by community members, the Board approved participation by the League in public forums about this, providing that no position on either side should be taken.

The question of what the League should do about the consideration of the concept of intelligent design in science classes was introduced as a result of a recent policy approved by Rio Rancho Board of Education. It states in part, "...this policy recognizes that the Rio Rancho Public schools should teach an objective science education, without religious or philosophical bias, that upholds the highest standards of empirical science." "Intelligent design" is the latest approach to teaching "Creationism" in the public schools, a goal of religious conservatives in New Mexico for the last decade. "Intelligent design" is an effort to present a scientifically based argument while using a literal interpretation of the Bible to counter physical evidence that evolution is the basis for the development of life forms on earth.

While this seems irrational to many, the concerns of conservative religions in general can be understood, Karen Armstrong wrote in her 2000 book, *The Battle for God: A History of Fundamentalism*, as a result of the angst suffered since Francis Bacon (1561-1626), initiated modern science and the Age of Reason when he argued that all truths must be proven by the critical methods of empirical science and the evidence of our senses. Armstrong reasoned that this has caused a deep fear that the sense of power of God over the universe has been lost, that there will be no grounding for moral conduct, that there will be no assurance of an afterlife, and that the meaning of life itself is in question.

The notion of "intelligent design" appears to have its origin in Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). According to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Kantianism "held that the mind furnishes the forms of experience and the sense organs furnish only impressions. Our knowledge is therefore only subjective. But Kant shows the necessity of a belief in God, freedom, and immortality, if we are to have the institutions of civilization. And he further shows that without the a priori idea of intelligent design in nature we could not recognize any phenomena of life in plants or animals or other organisms."

Concern about the relationship of humans to the transcendent is ongoing. In the United States this is moving toward a differentiation between religion and spirituality. The results of an extensive survey of spirituality in America reported in the September 6, 2005, issue of Newsweek showed that 79 percent describe themselves as "spiritual" and 64 percent as "religious," implying an association with a formal religious organization. Eighty percent believed that the soul goes to heaven or to hell. The search for spirituality is essentially a private one.

But life is also about relationships to other human beings and the preservation of all living creatures and the resources that support them, in my opinion. In an age when people of differing beliefs and values are joined in a global political economy in which the limited resources of the planet must be shared by a whole living system, there is a need for a sense of community. This requires a social ethic that will unite, that will lead to harmonious relationships and avoid violent conflicts over religion

and the equitable distribution of scarce physical and financial resources.

A comforting thought is that a common social ethic in all the world religions calls for treating others as you would have them treat you. It calls for empathy, for understanding how others feel and working for the common good. But the goal of the present economy is to compete with others to accumulate more money than they have in order to satisfy national and personal desires for power and prestige. The very narrow goal behind the No Child Left Behind Act in place now is to assure that all students can read, write and to understand and use science so that the nation's businesses can successfully compete in the world economy.

If peace and good will are to prevail in the world, the primary purpose of education should be to assure that people learn how to use their knowledge and skills with wisdom throughout life, treating others as they would be treated. Education should help individuals learn to think holistically, recognizing that everything is interrelated. It should equip them with a sound character and a social conscience that provide the ability and willingness to create a world in which not only the physical and intellectual, but also the moral, social, emotional, spiritual, and aesthetic needs of every individual are met now and in future generations.

Between now and 2007 when the No Child Left Behind Act comes before Congress for reconsideration and reform there is much to talk about to improve education. Local Leagues could initiate and facilitate discussions among community members. Such events could address not only the proper places and ways for teaching about religion and the origin of life, but also what reforms are necessary in public schools in order to fulfill the true purposes of education.

Elizabeth Best, Education Chair

Sustainability Study

At its May 2005 convention, LWVNM accepted a proposal for a two-year state study leading to a state position on sustainability. The first year will be devoted to education and gathering input from the local Leagues. Local League unit meetings on this study are as follows: Los Alamos: Oct. 27, 2005; Albuquerque/Bernalillo County: Nov. 10, 15, 16 and 21, 2005; Santa Fe County: Jan. 9 and 11, 2006, Greater Las Cruces: Mar. 8, 2006. A series of articles on the need for LWVNM to adopt sustainability as a position or as a guiding principle is appearing in *La Palabra*. These articles and other study materials are available at www.lwvnm.org.

LWVLA Sustainability Committee, Gale Zander Barlow, Chair