



League Contacts

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The League of Women Voters of New Mexico, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Call to Council

May 17, 2014, 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Historic Santa Fe Hilton Hotel

100 Sandoval Street

AGENDA

- 11:30 a.m. Registration
- 12:00 - 1:15 p.m. Luncheon and Speaker
Speaker: Former State Senator Dede Feldman
"Improving the Legislative Process"
- 1:30 - 2:30 p.m. LWVNM Council
 - Treasurer's Report
 - Presentation and Adoption of Budget
 - Report from state committees
 - Reports from local Leagues
- 2:30 - 3:00 p.m. Board Meeting

Guest speaker, Dede Feldman, was the first woman elected to the New Mexico Senate from the North Valley of Albuquerque. In her 16 years in the Senate, she was a pioneer for women in government. Senator Feldman is known best for her success in promoting campaign finance reform, improved health care for New Mexicans, and election reform.

Ms. Feldman holds both a BA and an MA in Political Science from the University of Pennsylvania. She built her foundation for change with a varied background as a journalist, high school and university teacher, and the owner of a small public relations business. As a State Senator, she made a great impact on the lives of women, children and people struggling to make ends meet. She sponsored scores of successful initiatives, including many related to health care reform.

Call to Council (Continued from page 1)

As the long time chair of the interim Health and Human Services Committee, she championed health care reform long before the Affordable Care Act. She passed laws toughening insurance rate reviews and made it harder for insurance companies to discriminate against people with pre-existing conditions. Senator Feldman also played a key role in ethics and campaign finance reform. She sponsored bills to limit campaign contributions and created public financing for both the state's higher courts and the Public Regulation Commission's elections. She is responsible for the requirement of the public disclosure of contributions and open legislative conference committees.

After retiring from the Senate, Senator Feldman wrote *Inside the New Mexico Senate: Boots, Suits and Citizens*. This book is required reading for those who want to understand the legislative process. She also returned to her work helping non-profit public interest and health care advocacy groups. At the LWVNM Council meeting, she will talk about her recommendations to make our unique citizen's legislature more effective.

Please come to discuss proposals with League delegates and other members in Santa Fe on Saturday, May 17.

**League of Women Voters of New Mexico
COUNCIL REGISTRATION FORM**

May 17, 2014, 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., Historic Santa Fe Hilton*

**Please send this form and a check for \$22 payable to LWVSFC by May 10.
Mail to LWVSFC, 1472 St. Francis Drive, Santa Fe, NM 87505.**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

I am attending as (Please check one)

_____ Local League delegate from _____

_____ MAL delegate

_____ LWVNM Board Member

_____ Non-delegate member/observer/guest (circle one)

Please select menu choice. Luncheon includes entrée, bread, dessert, iced tea, coffee/decaf.

_____ Salmon Caesar Salad

_____ Vegetarian Option-Large Fruit Plate

LWVNM Board members who are not local League presidents or delegates and MAL delegates should **NOT** send a check with their registration. Instead, please contact LWVNM Treasurer Cheryl Haaker who will be paying your registration fee. Phone: 505-298-7415 or Email ckhaaker@gmail.com.

*Historic Santa Fe Hilton is located at 100 Sandoval St. between Water St. and San Francisco St., just 2 blocks from the historic Santa Fe Plaza, 505-988-2811.

**League of Women Voters of New Mexico
Proposed Budget 2015-2016**

Operating Budget			Expenses (Con't)	2014-15	2015-16
Income	2014-15	2015-16			
A. Contributions			C. Fundraising Expenses		
Members	100	0	Events	0	0
Non-Members	0	0	Mailing	0	0
Total Contributions	100	0	Total Fundraising Exp.	0	0
B. Fund Raising	0	0	D. Member services		
C. Local PMP			MAL Service	0	0
Central NM	2320	2320	Newsletter Printing	800	400
Las Cruces	884	884	Mailing Services	150	0
Los Alamos	780	780	Newsletter Postage	200	50
Santa Fe	1287	1287	Newsletter Editor	25	25
Total PMP	5271	5271	Membership Dev.	0	0
D. MAL Dues	560	630	MAL PMP	573.50	448
E. Other Income			Total Member Serv.	1748.50	923
Special Events	0	0	E. Operating Expenses		
Interest	10	10	Office Use	600	600
Auction - Conv.	0	700	Office Supplies	0	0
Miscellaneous	0	0	Constant Contact	200	300
Total Other Income	10	710	Postage Stamps	0	0
I. Grants			Website	20	20
PAVP Carry Over	858	354	Copying	20	20
Total Grants	858	354	Insurance	425	425
Total Income	6799	6965	Miscellaneous	60	60
Expenses			Total Operating Exp.	1325	1425
A. Board Administration			F. Program - Advocacy		
Meeting Space	0	0	League Day	200	200
Meeting travel	0	0	Position Support	50	50
Training	0	0	State Studies	0	0
Total Board Admin	0	0	Legis. Reception	858	900
B. Delegate Expenses			Total Program Adv.	1108	1150
LWVNM Conv.	400	200	G. Grants to Local Leagues		
LWVNM Council	150	250	Voters Guide Supp.	0	0
LWVUS Conv.	2100	1100	H. Voter Services		
LWVUS Council	0	0	Other ???	0	0
Total Delegate Exp.	2650	1550	Newspaper Ads	600	0
			Total Voter Services	600	0
			Total Expenses	7431.50	5048
			To/From Savings Acct	632.50	-1917



President's Message

Why I Love the League!

For almost 100 years the League of Women Voters has fought for public participation in government. We are a microcosm of the way democracy should work. Not only do we come to our positions only after careful study and after members come to consensus on the issues, we deliberate transparently on our advocacy priorities. League members also “walk the talk” in our strong commitment to civil discourse. When we disagree, we do so respectfully and only after listening carefully to different perspectives on issues.

Our leaders have the responsibility and the authority to speak for us, but sometimes they need nudging. Occasionally, we, at the state level, have to nudge LWVUS to act on certain issues. Though all League board members are volunteers, we take our positions very seriously. Each of us does his or her part depending on time, priorities, and resources.

Though League members across the state may never meet each other, we constitute a community with shared values. A recent online discussion on the LWVNM Action listserv in reaction to the governor's edict that all public information requests be funneled through her chief of staff is a case in point. Sandra Richardson exclaimed,

“While others sit around and complain, I KNOW that, within the League, we will be DOING all we can, individually or as a group, to make a difference...to stand up AGAINST such political abuse ...to stand up FOR all that makes us civilized and constructive. ...We should proudly proclaim that, working collaboratively as we League members do, non-partisan, DOES make a difference...League women

and men, you make me proud!! Heroes all!”

Who could say what the League is and does any better than that?

I, for one, can't wait to attend the biennial Convention in Dallas, where about a thousand League representatives from all over the country will come together to decide the topic(s) for national study and to attend forums on a huge range of important issues. We'll leave even more inspired to continue “the good fight”.

Thank you for all you do to contribute to making this fine organization thrive. We appreciate all of your participation and financial support especially as we head into elections and prepare our wonderful but costly voter guides.

Meredith Machen



League of Women Voters of New Mexico

has two positions open for people who care about effective, non-partisan idea-sharing about important issues—the heart and soul of the League's mission:

Communications: Assist the editor of *La Palabra*, webmaster, and the president, with writing and/or layout of information about the League's activities and priorities.

Voters Guide: Help gather statements and photos from federal and statewide candidates.

You can be on or off board. We'll work with your schedule. Please contact Meredith Machen at president@lwvnm.org or (505) 577-6337 to learn more.

Summary of the 2014 Legislative Session

Dick Mason, Vice President & Chair of the Action Committee

The 2014 Legislative session was a 30-day session that dealt with budget and non-budget items that the governor said could be discussed. There weren't any major victories on League issues; on the other hand, there weren't any major defeats.

Three League-supported pieces of legislation were passed, but two of those were vetoed by the governor.

The lone League bill she signed was HB 19: Update School At-Risk Index that addressed some inequities in public education funding. On the "keeping bad things from happening" front, the bill that would have kept undocumented immigrants from obtaining driver's licenses was stopped in its first committee. The governor did not give her approval for a bill proposing a photo ID requirement for voting or for anti-choice legislation to be heard during the session. For a full list of LWVNM supported/opposed legislation visit: <http://www.lwvnm.org/Action/LWVtrack.pdf>.

There was an interesting dynamic on the budget this year. Two Democratic legislators missed the entire session due to illness. This left a very thin margin, and when one Democrat voted with the Republicans, the House could not pass a budget. The Senate then stepped in and passed a budget that was a compromise with the governor's office. The Senate budget was passed by the House. The governor signed the budget after making many line item vetoes. One of the main points of contention was how much education funding the state Public Education Department would be able to control versus how much would be under control of the local school districts.

The governor did approve of HB 82, which would have banned legislators and cabinet secretaries from being paid lobbyists for two years after they left office. It passed the House but died in the Senate. (See Ethics article, p. 6.)

Our Legislative Reception was well attended and the panel on Tax Fairness in New Mexico was excellent. About 20 legislators attended the reception.

Our Lobby Day was attended by about 45 League members, and our speakers were all well received.

The League continues to be frustrated with some of the operations of the Legislature. We question why the Senate Committee on Committees does not follow the Open Meetings Act. This is the committee that decides which bills are germane and will be heard during the session. We are also concerned that the Legislature continues to spend much of its time on the floor introducing constituents and discussing and voting on meaningless memorials. It is exasperating to see important legislation die on the Senate and House floor because too much time is spent on fluff.

We expect the Action Committee to start its calls in early May when we get the schedule for the Legislative Interim Committees.

Sunlight is the best disinfectant

William O. Douglas

U.S. Supreme Court

Associate Justice

1937-1939

New Mexico Senate Gets a Failing Grade on Ethics Legislation

Dick Mason and Meredith Machen

During the 2014 session of the New Mexico Legislature, the Senate blocked an important piece of legislation that would have improved the public's confidence in the accountability and fairness of our government.

Senate Bill 96 (Senator O'Neill) and House Bill 82 (Representative Kane) would have barred legislators and cabinet secretaries from being paid lobbyists for two years after leaving office. Because this legislation didn't deal with the budget, it needed a message from the governor in order to be heard. In giving the necessary message, Governor Martinez stated that she had already secured this commitment from her appointed cabinet secretaries.

Thirty-one states, both red and blue, have similar laws. Lawmakers in these states recognize that the "revolving door" between government and the private sector undermines public trust. New Mexicans agree, and in a recent poll 78% of New

Mexicans stated their support for such a law.

So what happened to the two bills? Senate Bill 96 was tabled in the Senate Rules Committee. House Bill 82 got better treatment. It passed two House committees and then passed the House 43-23, all with bipartisan support. HB 82 then went to Senate Rules where it died a quiet death. The Senate leadership say they received the bill late in the session, so time just ran out. That may have been a valid reason; however, they killed the Senate companion early in the session.

In 2015, The League of Women Voters will join with others to call upon New Mexico legislature to pass a law similar to those of other states or to the federal Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007, which increased the lobbying prohibition to two years (from one) and strengthened public disclosure requirements concerning lobbying activity and funding.

The Legislative Education Study Committee

Created in 1965 as a permanent bipartisan, bicameral interim committee of the New Mexico Legislature, the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC): conducts a continuing study of all education in New Mexico, the laws governing such education and the policies and costs of the New Mexico educational system including the training of certified teaching personnel in postsecondary institutions; funding levels for public education; changes in laws relating to education; and making a full report of its findings and recommendations.

The LESL is composed of 27 legislators (10 voting, 17 advisory) appointed to provide proportionate representation from both houses and both political parties. Assisted by a permanent staff, the committee meets regularly during the interim between legislative sessions to study education issues. To fulfill its statutory responsibilities, the LESL attempts to provide all legislators with objective information pertaining to New Mexico public schools as well as to state and national education trends.

From <http://www.nmlegis.gov/lcs/lesl/lesldefault.aspx>

PROGRAM UPDATE

Education

*Meredith Machen, Chair
LWVNM Education Committee*

New Mexico has been in the national news recently, designated as the worst state in which to raise a child. This depressing ranking owes, among other things, to the lack of funding going to education, health, and human services and the large percentage of our population living in poverty. New Mexico's dead last ranking in this category and our poor performance in job creation, employment, and other economic and social indicators negatively affect our quality of life.

To further the state's economic prospects and individual opportunities, we must improve our public school system. The needs of the high percentage of at-risk students (primarily students with disabilities and English language learners) should be addressed. Multiple factors contribute to our high drop-out rates, but lack of "adequate and sufficient" funding doesn't help.

The State Equalization Guarantee, known as the funding formula, determines how much goes to districts to pay teacher salaries and other instructional and operational costs. Over the past few years, the bipartisan NM Legislative Education Study Committee (see companion article on the LESC, p. 6) has endorsed legislation to overhaul this formula, increase overall funding, improve teacher and staff salaries, and institute fair student and teacher evaluation systems.

Some "educational reform initiatives" profit out-of-state corporations more than our schools. Information about contracts and educational outcomes are being requested by the League and many other entities. The

State Auditor and the Attorney General are investigating. Transparency and accountability are challenged by Governor Martinez's recent edict that all information requests go through her chief of staff, slowing or preventing legislative analysis of important data.

As a former teacher, the Vice President for Educational Leadership at Santa Fe Community College, and LWVNM observer at LESC meetings, I've grown quite familiar with a number of the reporting requirements. Reports provide educators, legislators, and the public with data needed to understand and address achievement gaps. Several standard reports have not been made available over the past few years, leading to great frustration.

We need to de-politicize education and let information flow if we expect to make significant progress. We need legislators and LESC staff, the Public Education Department, education experts and the public to work together cooperatively and diligently to improve our schools.

Natural Resources

Barbara Calef, Co-Chair

Most of the bills supported by the Natural Resources Committee died in committee during the short session of the NM Legislature. The only natural resource legislation enacted was the memorial calling for a statewide beaver management plan to minimize the conflicts between beavers and landowners while preserving their beneficial impact on watersheds. Most distressing was the failure of SB 89, which would have required the Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) to use federal funds for non-diversion

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Natural Resources *(Continued from page 7)*

alternatives to meet regional water supply needs in the Gila. The alternative proposal, to construct a large-scale diversion project, will cost far more than the available federal funds and will impact the fragile Gila ecosystem. The decision now rests with the ISC, but all of us will be paying if a dam is built. Although legislation for various water studies did not pass, there is \$100,000 in the final budget to study the impact of the drought and produce likely scenarios and a list of vulnerabilities in the state.

New Natural Resources Position Coming

Barbara Calef, Lee Lockie, Judy Williams

The Natural Resources Committee has been working on a new position for which we will seek concurrence. The LWVNM Board has been aware for at least four years that the current position on Natural Resources is inadequate and outdated. However, we lacked the human resources to conduct all the studies necessary to achieve a new position through education and consensus. We did engage in a Land Use study, holding forums and writing several articles for *La Palabra*. Then, last fall, Lee Lockie suggested that we write a new position, drawing from the positions of several other Leagues and our ongoing research. However, our concurrence policy specified that we could only adopt a specific position by accepting it verbatim. Seeking an alternative approach, we discovered that LWV of Virginia had a less restrictive policy that allows concurrence with recommendations or statements as well as the positions of other Leagues. On April 5, the LWVNM Board adopted a new Concurrence Policy and Procedure, (see p. 9) based on that of LWVVA and approved by LWVUS.

The proposed position draws upon information acquired during the Land Use study, the positions of other state Leagues, and lessons learned at the Legislature. Also, at the April 5 Board meeting we presented a draft of the new position and received provisional approval. After some more tinkering, we plan to make a presentation to each local League. Our goal is to bring the new position to the LWVNM Convention in 2015.

Alcohol Study: New Position

The Alcohol Policy Study Committee completed its three-year investigation last summer and subsequently visited each local League to hold consensus meetings. The committee then drew up a position based on the input from the local Leagues. On April 5, 2014, the LWVNM Board adopted the position below.

Alcohol Position (Adopted 2014)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico believes that alcohol abuse is a public health issue and can be most effectively approached as such.

To address the impact of alcohol abuse, the League supports the following:

- Raise taxes on the sale of alcohol. Research has shown increasing taxes is the single most effective way to reduce death, harm, and costs associated with alcohol abuse.
- Dedicate all funds raised by increasing taxes on alcohol to treatment and prevention programs. No taxes on alcohol should be distributed to the New Mexico General Fund.
- Give a high priority to screening and treatment solutions for alcohol abuse.

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Alcohol Position *(Continued from page 8)*

- Consolidate prevention programs to make better use of limited resources.
- Increase emphasis on community after-school services and supervision programs for minors.
- Enact laws making consumption of alcohol by minors illegal except under the supervision of their parents.

The League's priorities for taking action to reduce alcohol abuse are

1. Establish education and prevention programs, especially for minors.
2. Develop and fund well-organized, efficient, and effective treatment programs with dedicated revenue streams.
3. Increase parental responsibility by means of education and social responsibility laws.

Concurrence Policy and Procedures for LWVNM

(Adopted at the LWVNM Board Meeting on April 5, 2014)

Concurrence is the act of agreeing with or concurring with a statement or position. It can work in several ways. Groups of League members or League Boards can concur with: (1) recommendations of a study committee, local League or the state board; (2) decision statements formulated by League boards; or (3) positions reached by another League or Leagues. The state board has recommended revising the LWVNM bylaws to expand the process by which concurrence can be used in adopting or amending program. See proposed Article XI, Sec 2. This change recognizes the fact that the LWVNM has many positions that are due for updates, which may be achieved through a concurrence process. The new bylaws will expedite the process of proposing and adopting updated positions, while retaining oversight of the board and role of the membership.

Basic Concurrence Process:

1. Any League board, LWVNM study committee, or voting member planning to propose the adoption, elimination, or

amendment of a state League position by concurrence of the convention shall give notice to the state board of the intention to do so at least ten weeks before the convention.

2. Background information on the issue, including the timing, need, and importance of the issue and rationale for using this method, must be submitted to the state board with the proposal. Copies of the material may be sent to local Leagues and members-at-large (MAL) units for their information.

3. The state board will consider the proposal and include or exclude it from the proposed program that will be sent to the presidents of local Leagues and to the chairs of MAL units at least 30 days before the convention.

4. A majority vote of those present and voting at the convention is required to amend, eliminate or adopt a state League position recommended by the state board for concurrence by the convention.

5. A properly submitted concurrence proposal NOT recommended by the state board may

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Concurrence Policy and Procedures *(Continued from page 9)*

be considered if a majority of the convention delegates vote to do so. For adoption, the delegates must approve the concurrence by a two-thirds vote at a subsequent session of the convention. (This allows time for the delegates to consider the proposal.)

6. If the LWVNM board determines that emergency concurrence action is necessary, the board will seek the agreement, disagreement, technical edits, and comments from local Leagues and MAL units regarding the proposal of the board. Following receipt of aforementioned feedback, at its next meeting the state board will determine whether concurrence has been reached and approve the wording of the new or revised support position. Pursuant to Article XI Section 3c, the position is thereby adopted as a LWVNM position upon which it may take action and can only be amended by following the procedures of Article XIV.

PTSD and Mental Health Treatment Strategies for Returning Veterans and Families: Workshop Summary

Shelly Shepherd, Chair, Mental Health Care Services Study

This workshop was presented by Dr. Terry Arata-Maiers in Albuquerque on February 18, 2014. It was based on considerable research and included a lengthy bibliography. Dr. Arata-Maiers is a clinical psychiatrist who has worked with the families of wounded soldiers through the Child and Adolescent Psychology Service at Brooke Army Military Center since the beginning of the current Iraq and Afghanistan wars. She explained that to work effectively in treating families in such situations, the therapist must understand the military culture, treatment for traumatic stress, and additional clinical issues faced by veterans and military families. With many soldiers returning home from war, the need for therapists trained in working with these families exceeds the capacity of Veterans Services, and additional support will be needed in the private sector.

It is important to understand the shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices of the military culture. The military emphasizes honor, duty, loyalty, courage, and service before self. Common beliefs are that the group is more important than the individual; weakness is bad, and showing emotions is

weakness. The veteran may believe seeking therapy is showing weakness. The implication for providers is that specialized treatments are needed for veterans and their families. There are a number of training centers and publications available in this area.

Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can be the result of exposure to a traumatic event, actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violation. Twenty percent of soldiers returning from war show symptoms of PTSD, totaling about 300,000 in recent years. A study indicated that 500,000 Vietnam veterans have chronic PTSD, and the rates may be increasing. The annual cost for disability payments is 20.5% of all Veterans Administration compensation payments. Medical discharge of one active duty member for PTSD costs an estimated \$250,000 in medical disability alone.

Military families face many challenges, even during peacetime. Those challenges include frequent moves, parental absence, dangerous parental occupation, heavy workloads, isolation, community ambivalence and

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PTSD Workshop *(Continued from page 10)*

middle-age retirement of parent. Additional wartime stresses include fear of injury or death of a parent, loneliness, financial stress, and extended and/or multiple deployments. Forty-nine percent of the children of service members injured in combat have emotional or behavioral symptoms and ninety-three percent display internalizing symptoms. There are many post-deployment adjustment difficulties including changes in the service member, reestablishing roles, communication, household routines, family decisions, children's expectations, and marital intimacy. The family must work together to establish a "new normal".

Intensive therapy training is available at various websites, including the Center for Deployment Psychology: <http://deploymentpsych.org/training/workshops>.

Mental Health Care Services Study Committee

Shelly Shepherd, Chair

In 2013, the Mental Health Care Services Study Committee decided to focus on the following areas:

1. Scope/magnitude of New Mexico's mental health problems.
2. Mental health funding.
3. Evidence-based treatment, best practices, standards of care, and statistical and other analysis.
4. Priorities, including people who are in danger, children/veterans, alcohol/drug abuse, developmentally disabled, things that will leverage treatment effectiveness (e.g. Project Echo and better coordination).
5. Outcomes (e.g. public education and legislation recommendations).

The committee consists of 22 members and other interested people. Most members are from the LWVNCM League. The committee invites participation from members in other parts of the state. The participants meet every 4th Thursday of the month at 5:30 p.m.. The next meeting will be held May 22, 2014, at 5:30 p.m. at La Veda Llena, Alta Vista Building, 10801 Lagrima de Oro. State Senator Bill O'Neil will be the speaker. We invite all LWVNCM members interested in mental health issues to attend. For directions, telephone Olin Bray at (505) 850-2402.

In February members of the committee attended a workshop led by Dr. Arata-Maiers, a clinical psychiatrist who works with the families of wounded soldiers at the Brooke Army Military Center in Texas. (See companion article, p.10.)

In March, committee members attended a roundtable discussion presented by the Southwest Region of the Scholars Strategy Network, the New Mexico Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, and the Society for Applied Anthropology. The Roundtable participants were State Senator Jerry Ortiz y Pino, Kimmie Jordan (National Alliance on Mental Illness), Connie Chavez (Behavioral Health Advocate), Nancy Koenigsberg (Disability Rights New Mexico), and Julianna Koob (National Association of Social Workers-New Mexico).

Senator Jerry Ortiz y Pino reported that none of the proposed bills regarding behavioral health care were adopted. The governor vetoed the few bills passed by the Legislature. He indicated that he believes behavioral health care has become a profit source for insurance companies, and non-Medicaid services availability has been reduced by over 20 percent. Senator Ortiz y Pino believes the state of New Mexico needs to return to regionalized mental health services that the state had 30 years ago before managed care took over.

Julianna Koob projected a list of strategies, goals and objectives for rebuilding our behavioral health care system in New Mexico and added suggestions from attendees. Some of the goals are data collection, including what the current services are, who is being served, and gap analysis. Among other goals suggested: return to the 1970's community mental health centers model, increase consumer voice power, increase transparency and due process. Coordination of

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LOCAL LEAGUE NEWS

Central New Mexico (LWVCNM)

Andrea Targhetta, President

In November Jennifer Landau, Executive Director, NM Immigrant Law Center, spoke on improving access to justice in deportation proceedings; Dorianne Mason, NM Center on Law & Poverty, gave insight into the issue of immigrant access to health care; and Michael Puccetti, Center for Immigration and Citizenship Legal Assistance, discussed proposals for reform of the immigration system and the Center's services available to immigrants.

Mary Ann Saunders, special assistant to the UNM President, informed us of the Global Education Initiative that has begun to make it easier for more foreign students to study here and for students from New Mexico to study abroad. She discussed how foreign study broadens the outlook of those who participate in the exchange, and how it is economically advantageous to have a larger international community. The university has opened offices in Mexico City and Beijing to further this endeavor.

One of the most rewarding moments for League members is attending a naturalization ceremony. After the ceremony, CNM is among the line of well-wishing organizations greeting the newcomers. We shake their hands, present them with LWV literature and a registration application. We tell them they are now eligible to register to vote in elections. It shouldn't come as a surprise that many of these new citizens have not had the opportunity to do just that.

In January, Sue Wilson Beffort, ranking Senate Republican on the Legislative Finance Committee, spoke concerning the proposed budget and the complexity of merging with

the governor's own proposed budget. Marla Shoats, a Bernalillo County lobbyist, explained how she interacts with legislators, business entities, and individuals. Quite often she roams the halls of the Roundhouse, "educating" legislators on issues that could affect the economy and the lives of New Mexicans. We also heard a narrative on activism. Richard Valdez and his wife lost two sons who had hemophilia to AIDS and hepatitis C due to contaminated blood transfusions. He related how he was instrumental in cleaning up the contaminated blood supply in the late 1980's.

Jan Bray has given several talks on "Reducing Death and Harm from Alcoholism in New Mexico" at the AAUW and the First Methodist Church. She also was interviewed on KUNM radio concerning this three-year state Alcohol Study.

Dr. Meagan Thompson, an assistant professor at the UNM College of Pharmacy, role-played scenarios of prescription drug abusers with some of her students. The audience asked these "in character" students questions about their addictions. At another meeting Larry Loring and Bobby Padilla, registered pharmacists and police officers, reported that New Mexico had 28 deaths due to prescription drug overdose for every 100,000 people in the state. The national average is 12 deaths for every 100,000.

We featured Sunshine Week with a talk by Randolph "Dolph" Barnhouse, an attorney who has worked to see that the public has access to government information. He related quite a few situations where both organizations and individual citizens used the Freedom of Information Act.

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Local League News - LWVCNM *(Continued from page 12)*

We were proud to honor Dorothy (Tooker) Walton with her 50-year Life Membership. This lady has been a great asset to the League, opening her home many times for gatherings and working on several committees.

We had an exceptional opportunity to hear from two Girls State members who related their experiences while participating in a mock government at Eastern New Mexico University in Portales. This organization is a good fit with LWV, and we will nurture our relationship.

CNM moderated a forum for the Village of Corrales Council and Mayor races. For a small village of 8,000 citizens, the turnout was surprising at over 300. Our League also moderated and provided a time keeper for the Bernalillo County Democratic Party Gubernatorial Candidate Forum. There were five candidates on the stage before an audience of 200 plus. The candidates answering questions were Gary King, Linda Lopez, Howie Morales, Lawrence Rael, and Alan Webber.

Greater Las Cruces (LWVGLC)

Erika Graf-Webster, President

We have had a busy late winter and early spring. In February, the League was invited by the local AAUW chapter to their monthly meeting to make a presentation on Affordable Housing. The LWVGLC Affordable Housing study was done in 2011-2012; however, the committee members have maintained an ongoing involvement with affordable housing issues in the community. Affordable Housing Committee members Jane Carter, Vicki Simons, and Christina Little presented the League study findings and discussed in some detail the current

woefully inadequate housing available for the poor. The presentation was well received.

Also in February, we conducted a Candidates' Forum for the Town of Mesilla municipal election. This was well attended, and the questions from the audience were quite insightful.

Our Education Committee continues its excellent work, currently focusing on two new ongoing mini-studies: 1) science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and 2) for-profit online charter schools. The goal of the mini studies is to expand information related to our current education position and educate League members and the community on these issues. The Education Committee also wrote to the NM Attorney General, asking him to investigate the legality of the contract between K12 Inc., a for-profit virtual charter school, and the Farmington School District. The Attorney General responded, promising to look into this.

Our Mental Health Services Committee continues monitoring the mental health situation in Las Cruces and has attended numerous meetings on this contentious subject. Unfortunately, no immediate resolution seems to be on the horizon, and Las Cruces remains underserved in this area.

In early April, the League supported a series of "Great Conversations" on the subject of the minimum wage, sponsored by the Las Cruces City Council. A large panel, whose members were designated by the councilors, discussed the minimum wage issue during three evening sessions. The panel seemed somewhat unbalanced since there were more representatives of small local businesses than representatives of minimum wage workers and some of the discussion became quite

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emotional. One fact that did emerge was that, based on the Las Cruces economy, a minimum wage of about \$8.50 was needed as a minimal “living wage”.

We held a new member orientation in late March that was attended by about 10 individuals who joined the League in the last 6 months. Per our strategic plan, we instituted the practice of assigning a current League member to each new member as a mentor (termed a “buddy”), so that the new member would have someone who could provide information about all the different League activities, and encourage the new member to be an active participant. We think that this “buddy” system will make the League a much friendlier place for our new members.

Los Alamos (LWVLA)

Barbara Calef, President

For the first time the Los Alamos League’s Legislative Preview was covered by both of our local news publications. All three of our legislators participated. Education was a major theme for the evening. Representative Stephanie Garcia Richard announced that she would sponsor a constitutional amendment to limit class size to 18 for grades K-3. Another constitutional amendment would have returned the power currently in the hands of the Secretary of Public Education to the elected state Board of Education. Neither passed, but Garcia Richard was successful in her effort to fix the State Lottery Scholarship Fund.

The Los Alamos League is participating in a campaign led by the Sierra Club to educate the public specifically about the impact of

single use plastic bags on the environment and more generally about the environmental and financial cost of waste disposal. This is an on-going endeavor. During a Lunch with a Leader talk, Public Works Director Philo Shelton told the group that sustainability, which he defined as concern for the triple bottom line of economy, environment, and social equity, is the goal of a variety of county programs, including affordable housing, free transit, complete streets, and solar electric panels. Because the price of solid waste disposal is rising by 5% a year, his department is particularly interested in incentives to reduce shipments to the landfill. Under consideration is an approach to charge customers according to the size of their roll carts and frequency of pick up instead of the current flat rate. Other initiatives include a composting facility that will open this spring and expanded curbside recycling. The county’s glass recycling program is flourishing.

LWVLA devoted two evenings to consensus questions for the LWVUS Agriculture Study. Leagues across the country conducted similar meetings and are sending reports to LWVUS. As part of the LWVUS Agriculture Study, Dr. Richard Sayre, Director of the Biofuels Project at the New Mexico Consortium, was invited to speak at Lunch with a Leader about the regulatory approval processes for genetically modified foods and the potential benefits as well as perceived risks.

Why use genetic engineering to produce crops? Genetic engineering promises to alleviate hunger and malnutrition that kill over a million children a year and impair many more. With funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Sayre has been leading a project in Africa to produce genetically engineered cassava. Cassava is a new world plant, but has become the most widely grown food in Africa. It provides

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calories—but little else. Sayre and his team of scientists have been able to increase the levels of vitamins A and E, iron, zinc, and the protein content. They also were able to extend the shelf life from 48 hours to two weeks and to reduce the toxicity, making it easier to process the root for safe consumption.

In the U.S., the most widely utilized modifications are herbicide tolerance, insect resistance, or a combination of the two. Sayre explained that modified crops require less pesticide application and less plowing, thus saving energy, reducing CO₂ emissions and soil erosion. Genetic engineering makes it possible to transfer a single gene, whereas in traditional breeding the desired trait may be accompanied by unwanted genes.

Of course, there are significant problems and risks with genetic engineering that must be confronted. To assure that crops are safe, the regulatory process is very rigorous. Required analysis and testing contribute to the cost of development, which can be as high as \$20 million to get a single trait through the process. Sayre believes that it is essential to continue the effort in order to be able to produce enough food for the future.

Santa Fe County (LWVSFC)

Donna Reynolds, President

Program

During Women’s History Month, LWVSFC launched a new mentoring program in collaboration with Santa Fe Public Schools and the New Mexico History Museum. The League’s project pairs middle school girls with professional woman for three years as part of a job shadowing opportunity.

Mentors, students, guests, and League members were invited and encouraged to attend the League’s Women’s History Month Breakfast. Nearly 90 participants attended the breakfast that honored Adelina Otero-Warren. Kathryn Flynn, Executive Director of the National New Deal Preservation Association, introduced the honoree saying, “The League could not have selected a more deserving woman than “Nina”, who was a key suffragist working for the passage of legislation giving the right to vote to women.” Students attending the breakfast were eligible for several door prizes including a mini iPad. Immediately following the breakfast, all participants were invited on a free tour of the New Mexico History Museum led by museum educator, Melanie LaBorwit, who focused on women’s contributions.

Municipal Election Voter Services

Our Voter Services Committee hosted three well-attended municipal candidate forums and produced a *Voters Guide* in partnership with the *Santa Fe New Mexican* newspaper.

Action & Advocacy

LWVSFC authored an article in the *Santa Fe New Mexican* supporting a number of proposed city charter amendments. The amendments supported by LWVSFC were approved by the voters including the requirement that the city “protect, preserve, and enhance the city’s water resources through regulation, conservation, and tying development to water availability.” Other League initiatives approved were establishing an independent citizens’ redistricting commission to designate voting districts at least every ten years, limiting the amount of campaign contributions that can be accepted by all candidates, ensuring the timely disclosure of the purposes of proposed tax increases and bond measures, and allowing the mayor to have a vote on all matters before city council.



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Mental Health Care Services Study Report *(Continued from page 11)*

care, especially in rural areas, and a system inclusive of Native Americans need to be implemented. Strategies include roundtable discussions with consumers, providers, and legislators around the state; providing a system for oversight and corrective actions by the Legislature; creating community organized plans, responding to the anticipated N.M. Attorney General audit; and communication between community mental health centers and the Human Services Department. Other strategies include educating consumers about their legal rights, a central website to collect stories, consumer task force, increased wages for caregivers, and adopting laws to change the system.

The committee met on March 27. A panel from Peanut Butter and Jelly Family Service (PB&J) presented information about their program. PB&J has therapeutic pre-school locations in Southwest Albuquerque, Bernalillo and Southeast Albuquerque. PB&J is the only preschool program in the nation that includes parents. It provides family support for parents and foster parents at their homes as well as at the schools. It has health care services at all sites. It provides breakfast and lunch at the schools, and food boxes for those who need them. The state has drastically cut support for children “at risk for delays” due to environmental risk factors. Three, four and five year olds have been eliminated from services because the state’s new “model” serves only birth to three-year olds. The 2013 Kids Count Data Book indicated we had dropped from 43rd place in 2009 to 50th in the nation for child well-being.