



La Palabra

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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.

Alcohol Study moves forward

Editor's Note: The LWVNM Alcohol Study is underway. Jan Bray, study chair, prepared this report to update members of the study's status.

Alcohol has been the most widely used mood-altering substance from earliest recorded history. Today more alcohol is consumed than ever before and the World Health Organization (2002) estimates that, globally, alcohol misuse caused 1.8 million deaths in the year 2000. It is one of the leading causes of preventable death and disability.

In New Mexico, alcohol-related death rates from causes other than driving while intoxicated have increased. We have been among the top three states for total alcohol-related death rates every year since 1981. The two major categories are deaths due to chronic disease and those due to alcohol-related injuries. Chronic liver disease is the leading cause with 271 deaths in 2006. Falls, suicide and homicide are major types of alcohol-related injury deaths.

According to the New Mexico Department of Health, alcohol problems in the state primarily involve binge drinking and chronic heavy drinking, not alcohol dependence. Several independent expert reviews conducted in the last decade have made clear and consistent recommendations on the best evidence based strategies to reduce excessive alcohol use and its consequences.

There are two complementary approaches to alcohol harm reduction. We can begin with the individual and change behavior. We can also change the environment in which drinking occurs.

Screening can effectively identify existing or potential alcohol problems and motivate patients to address them before they become more serious. Screening and brief intervention for alcohol misuse can be performed by primary health care workers using tested protocols and questionnaires. This is one of the most cost-effective individual interventions, according to *The Essential Handbook of Treatment and Prevention of Alcohol Problems*. There are many types of environmental prevention programs. One of the most effective is raising the price of alcoholic beverages. Evidence suggests this strategy especially impacts the consumption among high-risk groups including under age and chronic heavy drinkers. The damage caused by alcohol is especially prevalent among these groups (NM Department of Health). Other more general forms of environmental change include education about the effects of alcohol and advertising

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2012 LWVNM Council hears from Peggy Hill, leaders of state studies

Peggy Hill, the former LWVUS liaison to New Mexico's leagues, was the luncheon speaker during the League of Women Voters of New Mexico Council Meeting May 12. She spent most of the time talking about chairing the national League's Education Study.

The meeting was attended by the LWVNM Board of Directors and delegates representing the various Leagues around the state and Members at Large.

As part of the Council, leaders of three state studies presented reports on their progress.

* **Land Use:** Barbara Calef, chair of the state study of land use, announced that Natural Resources Chair Lora Lucero was stepping down and moving to



Peggy Hill

the Middle East. Barbara also announced that she was not going to have time to work on the study personally but that it was important to continue working to revise the natural resources position because the current position is outdated.

* **Alcohol Study:** Jan Bray said that she was taking over leadership of the Alcohol Study following the death of Dee Watkins. She said the committee has a lot of information on alcohol treatment but needs to do more research in the area of prevention, the last piece of the study. She expects the committee to have a report completed and ready to present to the state League in the September-October time frame.

* **PRC:** Meredith Machen, member of the LWVNM Leadership Team, said that the study group is making progress on the study. Several members made a presentation on the study to the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos earlier this year. More information is expected to come in September.

Alcohol Study

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campaigns to make excessive drinking culturally unacceptable.

The Epidemiology Division of the Department of Health estimates that alcohol abuse costs each New Mexican \$1,400 a year in alcohol-related prevention and treatment services, productivity costs and property damage.

The study committee will be providing you with detailed information and be happy to give a presentation to your League.

-- Jan Bray, Study Chair

Alcohol Study consensus questions

At its July 21 meeting the LWVNM board agreed to focus the Alcohol Study on the following consensus questions:

- 1) Is alcohol abuse a public health issue? Explain your answer.
- 2) If you do believe alcohol abuse is a public health

Local TV stations offer senate candidates forums

Candidate forums for the U.S. Senate seat will be held on the following dates.

* Oct 11, 6-7 p.m. at KRQE studios

* Oct 21, 6-7 p.m. at KOAT studios

* Oct 25, 7-8 p.m. hosted by KOB at a venue to be determined.

The candidates are Democrat Martin Heinrich and Republican Heather Wilson.

issue, what policy changes are needed to alleviate the problem in New Mexico?

- 3) Would any of these changes cause undesirable outcomes?
- 4) How should the League prioritize any proposed changes?

The Supreme Court decision on the ACA and Medicaid

By Dick Mason

As you all know, on June 28 the Supreme Court of the United States ruled the majority of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was constitutional. There was one part of the decision, concerning Medicaid expansion that was troublesome.

The Supreme Court ruling said that the states could refuse the Medicaid expansion offered by the federal government, and the federal government could not penalize them by taking away the state's existing Medicaid funding. What does this mean for New Mexico?

First, let me explain how Medicaid funding works. The federal government requires that you cover certain populations with a core set of benefits. States can then apply for waivers to cover other benefits and other populations. Depending on a number of factors, the federal government pays a certain percentage of the costs of Medicaid and the state pays the rest. For New Mexico the percentage paid by the federal government varies between 70 and 80 percent. In 2013 the percentage covered by the federal government was slightly over 70 percent.

New Mexico, like 42 other states, does not offer Medicaid coverage to low income nondisabled adults without children (there are a few exceptions). That means that even if you are penniless you cannot receive Medicaid. The Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act would cover this population and would pay 100 percent of the cost for three years and 90 percent of the cost from then on. This could expand coverage to as many as 180,000 more New Mexicans. Quite a deal! But despite that, some governors have said they will refuse to accept the Medicaid expansion. Governor Martinez has said she has some concerns about the long-term costs, but has not said she will refuse the Medicaid expansion. The job of advocates is to convince the Governor and the Legislature that this is a good deal for New Mexico.

The LWVNM believes it is the right thing to do for New Mexicans and is a win-win situation for New Mexico. Here are just some of the reasons why:

*** Expanding Access to Health Care** Medicaid Expansion will provide health coverage for well over 120,000 New Mexicans, most of

whom are "working poor adults" -- they have jobs but no health insurance. When they get any health care, it's likely to be in the emergency room at great expense. Medicaid coverage will mean these individuals can get check-ups and preventive services, follow-up care for accidents or illnesses, and management of chronic diseases. This is a golden opportunity to reduce New Mexico's high rate of uninsured and bring us up from the bottom of the national rankings on health coverage. Far beyond statistics, this is literally a matter of life and death for people who otherwise can't afford insurance or routine health care.

*** A Real Bargain for the State** The federal government will pay the entire cost of the expansion for the first three years. The federal share then will gradually phase down to 90 percent for 2020 and thereafter. The most the state will ever pay is just ten cents on the dollar. Even that minimal portion of the cost will be more than covered by revenues to the state from existing health care taxes generated by the Medicaid Expansion. Additionally, the expansion will save the state \$40 to \$60 million annually because we'll no longer have to fund the State Coverage Insurance program for this population.

*** New Mexicans Will Get the Benefits of Our Own Tax Dollars** Many other states will choose to expand Medicaid and the costs will be paid mostly by federal dollars. If New Mexico does not expand Medicaid, we will still be paying federal taxes to support other states' programs without getting the benefits of health care coverage for New Mexicans.

*** Fairness** The federal law was written assuming that low-income people would get coverage through Medicaid. They are not eligible for subsidies to buy private insurance. If New Mexico refuses to expand Medicaid, poor families-- including parents and people working for low wage -- won't have the means to afford it. It would be unconscionable if the poorest and most vulnerable among us were left without help.

*** Economic Stimulus and Jobs** Federal Medicaid funds for the expansion will inject billions into New Mexico's economy starting in 2014. The economic activity generated by these new federal

Natural Resources Committee report

By Barbara Calef and Judy Williams

On May 31 LWVNM sent a letter to Governor Martinez and the Public Regulation Commission (PRC), which read in part, “We are asking you to uphold the Clean Air Act by ensuring that PNM complies with Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) requirement for the installation (in the San Juan Generating Plant or SJGP) of selective catalytic reduction controls... These controls would reduce nitrogen oxide by 80 percent. The technology proposed by PNM and the state would reduce nitrogen oxide, which has severe negative health effects, by only 20 percent. If the selective catalytic reduction is not installed, we urge you to require PNM to retire one or more of its coal-fired units altogether and replace them with clean energy.”

PRC Commissioner Doug Howe responded with an invitation for League members to meet with him to discuss the issues. LWVNM board members Meredith Machen, Mona Blaber, Judy Williams and Barbara Calef participated in the meeting, which took place on June 29. Howe began by commenting that the PRC has no jurisdiction over the decision. However, the inevitable rate hike will need to be approved by the Commission.

Howe went on to review the background for the current impasse. The EPA requires that the state develop a plan to bring it into compliance with the Clean Air Act. The NM Environment Department (NMED) produced an implementation plan that was accepted except for the proposal for improving conditions at SJGP. The EPA proposed selective catalytic reduction controls (SCR) for the plant, but PNM refused to accept them because of the high cost, expressing preference for a less effective alternative, selective non-catalytic reduction (SNCR). At the time of our meeting, the case was in federal court, but Howe predicted that the EPA would win and New Mexico would be forced to implement the EPA plan.

The trouble with that outcome, explained Howe, is that although the EPA plan would bring the state into compliance with the Clean Air Act, it would do nothing to reduce CO2 emissions or the huge amount of water consumed by the plant. Furthermore, financing the large debt incurred to pay for the SCR (\$800 million for the whole project) would force the utilities to continue to operate the plant until 2090. And it's very outdated already! Built in 1973, it is only 30

are 60 percent efficient.

Following up on a suggestion from Commissioner Howe, the same board members later met with Dan Klein, an energy analyst and president of Twenty-First Strategies. Klein observed that both the EPA’s plan and the state’s are bad options. SCR actually increases the release of CO2 into the atmosphere. Earlier this year he investigated the issues and produced an analysis that suggested an alternative approach. Subsequently, the EPA granted a 90-day stay to give NMED and PNM an opportunity to propose a new plan.

Klein told the League members that the low price of natural gas has created new opportunities. If PNM implements a combination of SNCR and natural gas, both the environment and society benefit. He suggests closing down the two oldest units at the SJGP and installing SNCR on the other two. The cost would be 40 percent less than for implementing SCR, and the plant would emit 3.5 tons less of CO2 per year, for a total NM reduction of 5 percent. In response to a question about the amount of water used in fracking to produce the natural gas, Klein responded that it is far less than the requirement for producing electricity from coal.

Three LWVNM Natural Resources Committee members met with Ron Darnell, vice president of Public Policy at PNM on July 27 to discuss what we had learned from Commissioner Howe, Dan Klein and various reports. Darnell confirmed that PNM is required to identify alternative solutions to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and state plans if it doesn't want to implement SCR for haze reduction. Darnell informed the League that while PNM wants a good solution, there are many owners of the SJGP, and many aspects to consider, such as where else to obtain a sufficient power base load to replace any units of the plant that can be shut down. The nine owners include PNM, Tucson Electric Power, Los Alamos County, Farmington, Utah Associated Municipal Power and others. PNM indicates that while some may want to close down some units of SJGP, others may not. The coal and ownership contracts end in 2017 and 2022, respectively.

The NMED will hold a series of nine stakeholder outreach meetings between August and September and convene a Technical Working Group starting Aug. 13 to consider options between now and the end of August. The schedule has not been announced by NMED, but the first meeting will be Aug. 9 in Shiprock; the focus will be on the Navajo Nation.

Clean Energy Standard

By Judy Williams

Western Resources Associates and several New Mexico organizations are promoting a state-level Clean Energy Standard. They propose to petition the Public Regulation Commission (PRC) to enact such a standard, which would require utilities to manage electricity generation from the facilities they own or buy from in order to achieve a 2-3 percent reduction per year in their carbon pollution. Following a review of materials and meetings, the LWVNM board voted to sign onto this petition in support of the Clean Energy Standard. To date, more than 15 organizations have signed onto the petition.

The petition for a clean energy standard is consistent with LWVUS positions on emissions

reduction, and LWVNM has advocated in the past for similar standards. This appears to be a creative and fair way to create a standard as it allows the utility to decide the best way to accomplish the goal. For example, they could choose to increase use of renewables, decommission all or part of a plant, etc.

LWVUS supports regulation of pollution sources by control and penalties; regulation and reduction of pollution from stationary sources; regulation of ambient toxic-air pollutants; action by appropriate levels of government to encourage the use of renewable resources. LWVUS is lobbying for carbon pollution limits and clean air.

Medicaid

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dollars will create tens of thousands of new jobs in our state, especially in rural areas, and increase revenues to state coffers.

*** Reduce Uncompensated Care.** New Mexico hospitals and other health care providers furnish an estimated \$335 million in uncompensated care every year. When people have health coverage like Medicaid, doctors, hospitals, and other health care providers can count on getting paid for their services. That's not only good for the providers, but it also reduces the burden on local governments to help cover these costs through their County Indigent Funds, which are paid for by taxpayers.

*** Lower Health Insurance Premiums.** Uncompensated care also raises insurance premiums for everyone as hospitals and other providers try to recover those costs. A typical New Mexico family with private insurance pays an estimated \$2,300 extra each year to cover uncompensated care. Because we have the second highest percentage of uninsured residents in the country, this cost-shifting to insurance premiums is particularly

high in New Mexico -- and it will continue if we leave people uninsured rather than covering them through the expansion of Medicaid. Businesses that pay for health insurance for their employees will be big losers if the state does not expand Medicaid coverage.

*** Health Care for Veterans.** Half of all uninsured veterans will be eligible for health care coverage under the Affordable Care Act. A refusal to expand Medicaid to low-income adults will leave many of these veterans without access to health care coverage.

*** The Supreme Court Decision on the Affordable Care Act was a great victory for New Mexicans.** As the state with the second highest rate of uninsured, we stand to benefit greatly from the decision. How much we benefit from the Affordable Care Act is dependent on how effective advocates are in making sure that New Mexico takes maximum advantage of the benefits offered under the Affordable Care Act. Please ask your legislator and the governor to support taking full advantage of the Medicaid expansion offered under the Affordable Care Act.

LWVNM supports Campaign Finance Resolution at LWVUS convention

In the 2012 Legislative session the LWVNM supported two memorials -- SM 3 (Fischmann) and HM 4 (Stewart) -- that asked our Congressional delegation to support an amendment to U.S. Constitution that would mitigate the effects of the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision that took away the Congress's power to regulate campaign spending. Senator John McCain (R-AZ) calls the Citizens United decision "the worst Supreme Court decision of the 21st century."

At the June 2012 LWVUS Convention the LWVNM delegates joined with other state and local Leagues to support a resolution that stated:

We, the representatives of local and state Leagues assembled at the 2012 LWVUS Convention, call upon the LWVUS Board to advocate strongly for all appropriate, duly-considered measures which may

include, but are not limited to, a constitutional amendment and which:

- * are consistent with our current positions on campaign finance reform and individual liberties;
- * allow Congress and the States to set reasonable regulations on campaign contributions and expenditures; and
- * ensure that elections are determined by the voters.

The Republican primary was just the first example of the corrosive effect of unregulated, and unreported, money in campaigns. We expect that it will become much worse in the general elections. Taking on a constitutional amendment is a huge task, but given the Supreme Court's decision we don't see another way of limiting the power of big money in elections.

-- Dick Mason

Board meeting highlights

Chris Burroughs, Secretary

May 12, 2012 Council Minutes:

During the meeting attendees gave directions to the Board: They included:

- 1) LWVNM should align its fiscal year with the IRS fiscal year.
- 2) Treasurers of local Leagues should get together with Haaker, Burn and Mason to find out how LWVGLC rearranged its fiscal year.
- 3) Delegates at the LWVUS convention should speak out against a raise in per member payment (PMP).
- 4) The LWVNM board was encouraged to consider fundraising efforts for the Ed Fund.
- 5) The LWVNM treasurer should continue to investigate establishing a Pay Pal account to allow people to make donations to the state via the web.
- 6) LWVNM should look into getting involved in community activities as LWVGLC has in Las Cruces. The Las Cruces group has been volunteering with the Children's Reading Foundation.
- 7) The board was encouraged to continue the pattern started this year at the 2013 League Day at the Legislature. This included a reception/panel discussion the day before and a panel on the actual day.

May 12, 2012 LWVNM Board Meeting Minutes Old Business

PAVP grant: Bonnie Burn moved that a portion of the remaining balance of the PAVP grant be used for the 2013 League Day at the Legislature. Calef seconded. The board unanimously approved the motion.

Documents being sent out via email: Meredith Machen suggested that when people are revising documents via email that they have a clear subject line and date it at the bottom of the document.

New Business

Letter to Attorney General: It was announced that the board approved via email a letter to Attorney General Gary King urging his support of a constitutional amendment to "Defend Our Democracy."

Calendar: The proposed calendar for the upcoming year was approved as amended.

July 21, 2012 Board Meeting Minutes

Treasurer's Report: Cheryl Haaker listed current balances, including \$9,011.36 in a Wells Fargo saving's account and \$1,764.43 in a checking account, for a total of \$10,775.79 in liquid assets.

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Board meeting highlights

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Consensus Questions for PRC Study: The board reviewed proposed consensus questions for the PRC. They narrowed the questions down to the following:

- What is the best approach to regulating the insurance industry in New Mexico?
- What qualifications and/or experiences should be required for candidates for the Public Regulation Commission (PRC)?
- Should the League support the selection of commissioners through a process that evaluates them on the basis of qualifications and the participation of the governor and state legislature?
- How can consumer interests be better protected by the PRC?
- How should the PRC be funded?
- Should the League support the state-level deregulation of market entry and rates for all private intrastate modes of transportation (such as taxis, limousines, buses, shuttles, towing companies, and moving companies?)

Meredith Machen moved to accept the ques-

tions as revised; Burn seconded. The board voted to accept unanimously.

Partnerships/Coalitions:

Common Cause: Mason moved to join the Common Cause Polling Place Participation and Protection Campaign and use PAVP funds for signs; Machen seconded. The board unanimously approved.

Use of remaining PAVP funds: Meredith Machen said there will be roughly \$1,000 left of the PAVP grant after the expenses for the 2013 legislative reception are accounted for. Discussion centered around using the remaining \$1,000 in the PAVP. Machen moved to make available from the PAVP grant fund \$600 for the ads in the local Leagues' Voters' Guides (\$150 for each league), \$350 for the Common Cause signage initiative and \$50 for ads in some newspapers in the state that do not have local leagues. (The ads would encourage people to look to the LWVNM website Voters' Guide.) Burn seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.

Voters' Guide questions reviewed: Barbara Calef moved to accept the Voters' Guide questions as amended; Haaker seconded. The board approved unanimously.

Local League news

Central New Mexico -- Shelly Shepherd & Sandra Browne, Co-Presidents

The LWVCNM annual meeting was held on May 5 at the MCM Elegante. Maggie Toulouse Oliver, Bernalillo County Clerk, reviewed the voter fraud investigation being conducted by the New Mexico Secretary of State and its implication for Bernalillo County. A moment of silence was given to honor recently deceased longtime active members Dee Watkins and Vivian Boyle. Richard (Dick) Mason and Teresa (Terry) Quinn were named to the LWVCNM roll of honor for their very conscientious and hard work as members of our League and as persons who have enriched this organization in many ways. Vivian Skadron was honored for reaching Life Member Status, having been a League of Women Voters member for 50 years.

Congratulations to all three members -- well done! Officers, directors, and the Nominating Committee (2013-14) were elected. Andrea Targhetta will be serving her second term as 2nd

Vice President. Karen Wentworth will be serving her second term as 3rd Vice President. Richard Mason will be serving his second term as treasurer. Christine Burroughs and Carol Tucker Trelease will serve their second term as directors. The Nominating Committee members for 2013-2014 are Laura Stokes, chair, Lisa Franzen and Jan Bray. The LWVCNM Board appointed three new directors: Peggy Boone Howell, Sonia Lersten and Alice Brasfield to serve on the board.

The LWVNM Council meeting was held in Albuquerque on May 12 at the MCM Elegante.

In June we had a luncheon focusing on "New Mexico's Journey toward Statehood," celebrating the Centennial Anniversary of NM statehood. Dr. Richard Melzer, a professor at UNM Valencia Campus, described the 62-year struggle, focusing on five major obstacles to achieving statehood. Dr. Melzer is a past president of both the

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Local League news

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Historical Society and the Valencia County Historical Society, and has received many awards for writing, teaching and service to his profession, such as UNM's Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award in 1995.

Calendar Planning was held on June 2. It was well attended, and programs for the year will consist of topics such as Science and Technology Education in Elementary and Secondary Schools; Campaign Finance Reform with Focus on the Citizen's United Supreme Court Decision; Health Care after the Supreme Court Decision on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; Potential for the Direction of Legislation in U.S. Congress and NM Legislature; Open Government; and Alcohol Concerns. We look forward to a year of interesting and stimulating topics.

Los Alamos -- Barbara Calef, President

During a County Council meeting in March, the Los Alamos Utilities Manager presented a resolution to the council supporting the New Mexico-proposed state implementation plan in lieu of the Environmental Protection Agency plan for the San Juan Generating Station near Farmington, N.M.. Los Alamos owns about 2 percent of the plant, which meets about 50 percent of our power requirements, so any required improvements will cost the county. LWVLA board member Lynn Jones spoke for our League in opposition to the resolution because the state plan only lowers the toxic nitrogen oxide pollutants by 20 percent, whereas the EPA plan reduces them by 80 percent. The state plan was proposed by PNM and adopted by the state, so it reflects the industry's desires. The council passed the resolution.

Legislation was passed last year to allow all county clerks in New Mexico the option of implementing Voting Convenience Centers to replace the traditional polling places. There are two advantages to the switch. It saves money for taxpayers by cutting down on required supplies and personnel, and voters are able to choose the most convenient of several locations. At the April Lunch with a Leader program, County Clerk Janet Foster and Bureau of Elections Manager Gloria Maestas explained how the change would affect voters in the upcoming

elections.

The Los Alamos League also held a pre-primary forum in May for contested offices from U.S. House of Representatives to District Attorney. Eleven candidates vying for four offices introduced themselves and answered questions from an audience of over a hundred.

The primary election ran smoothly as planned. The traditional polling places were not open, although someone was posted at each one to re-direct residents as needed. Instead, there were three voting convenience centers on Election Day. A voter registered in Los Alamos County could use any one of the centers. The appropriate ballot was printed on demand. In 2010 half of the total votes in Los Alamos were cast prior to Election Day. This year that is again an option.

Following the March adoption of our position on Environmental Sustainability, the League has sought advice from several local experts. The featured speaker at the Annual Meeting in April was Santa Fe Assistant County Attorney Steve Laurent, who has worked extensively with developers. The county has been trying for years to diversify its economy and to increase its retail business. However, the League is concerned that any development not be detrimental to the environment. Laurent warned that the onus is on the community to realize that the developer will only do what is required; to figure out what the residents want; and to codify the desired requirements so that the developer knows what must be included for a successful project.

Also in April, Janie O'Rourke, chair of the League's land use study, and Barbara Calef met with Gary Leikness, senior planner in the Community Development Department (CDD), to discuss how to achieve the objectives of our Environment position. Since our goals are already included in the County's Comprehensive Plan, Leikness recommended seeking the support of the Environmental Sustainability Board and the County officials responsible for the desired actions. Progress has been slow, but we are persistent.

Santa Fe County -- Judy Williams, President

The League is working with the *Santa Fe New Mexican* on an arrangement for the fall Voters' *(Continued on page 9)*

Local League news

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Guide. The League will gather content and the paper will format and print the *Guide*. While arrangements are not final, it appears that at least part of the guide expenses will be borne by the newspaper.

President Williams attended several meetings on clean energy for both the local and state league. Some meetings concern the possibilities for a municipal grid in Santa Fe, and others concern the proposed Clean Energy Standard (see article on page 5). Still others have concerned the San Juan Generating Plant and the EPA rulings.

League members met 18 visitors from Africa to discuss the League's role in grassroots democracy. The Santa Fe Council on International Relations arranged their visit through the U.S. State Department. Many interesting questions came from the delegates, including the role of women, the elections process, voting rights and others. Of particular interest to them was why voter turnout in the U.S. is so low when everyone has the right to vote, unlike many of their nations. Since they were here on primary day, they had a chance to observe voting first hand.

As part of the grant the Santa Fe League received from LWVUS, members registered voters at the Santa Fe High School. Voter registration activities will occur, in part with other groups.

At the request of Santa Fe County Manager Katherine Miller, League members met with her and Pablo Sedillo III, public safety director, on June 1. The purpose was to hear League concerns about recent personnel changes at the County Detention Center and the county's plans. After a fruitful discussion we arranged Lunch with a Leader at the Detention Center on July 24. On that day we toured the jail, met with corrections and county officials and sampled the inmate cuisine at lunch.

Greater Las Cruces -- Bonnie Burn, President

The start of the new League year, May 1, was a time of integrating newly elected members onto the board and planning for the year ahead. Elected to the board were Erika Graf-Webster, vice president and program, and Gracia Class and Gwen Hanson, co-directors of Voter Services. Ruth

Benjamins was elected treasurer; Roberta Gran, director of membership; and I remain on the board for one more year.

During the Primary Election, June 5, the Bureau of Election implemented 39 Voter Convenience Centers located throughout Doña Ana County. League members served as election workers and experienced the new system that worked very well. Voter information cards are now bar coded. Scanning the card displays the voter's registration information on a computer screen. After signing a signature pad, the appropriate ballot is printed for the voter. End of day closing takes much less time because unused ballots no longer have to be torn up and crossing out the names of people who did not vote is no longer required.

Voter services activities began in June. In collaboration with Comunidades en Acción y de Fie, CAFé, we are planning to publish English and Spanish editions of the *Voters' Guide*. Three candidates forums are scheduled in October to accommodate the large slate of individuals seeking elected offices in Doña Ana County. The forums will be held in the Las Cruces City Council Chambers and will be broadcast on live TV with the option of rebroadcast until the Nov. 6 general election. A collaborative effort to register voters throughout the county is underway with CAFé and other community groups that are working on getting out the vote.

In collaboration with the University of New Mexico and the University of Texas, El Paso, New Mexico State University (NMSU) hosted the 2012 Immigration Policy and Human Rights Conference, June 18-22, 2012. The conference brought together scholars and community leaders from the U.S. and Mexico who discussed the current legal and social challenges facing immigrants, border communities and policy makers. Maria Hinojosa was the keynote speaker. The documentary she produced, "Lost in Detention," was shown, and during her presentation she made the immigrant experience real through stories about detention, deportation and the New America that immigrants see.

The Institute for Community Engagement (IFCE) was introduced at a Lunch with a Leader meeting by Jane Asche, a League member who also serves on the Board of IFCE. The Institute focuses on a philosophy of collective community impact to

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Panoramic view of the biennial League of Women Voters of New Mexico Council meeting May 12.

(Photo by Cheryl Haaker)

Local League news

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resolve complex social issues. Its first effort sought to improve local government by electing interested, qualified people. Establishing a Children’s Reading Foundation and creating a leadership support team are among its 11 current projects. Established in 2009, IFCE follows a philosophy of collective

impact that is described in the article, “Collective Impact,” by John Kania and Mark Kramer, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter 2011. This philosophy seeks to find answers through a consolidated community effort of research and analysis of issues, development of policy options, and informing community members and leaders rather than by isolated individual organization intervention.

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