



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.

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LEAGUE DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE



SAVE THE DATES

Plans are set for the 2015 League Days at the Legislature.

Monday, February 9 – 5:30 to 7:30 PM

Garrett's Desert Inn, Santa Fe

Legislative Reception with panelists discussing public education

Tuesday, February 10 – 8 AM to 4 PM

League Day at the Legislature

Informative speakers on various League priorities meet at the New Mexico Land Office, 10 am to noon.

Unscheduled time leaves you free to attend committee sessions, meet with legislators, etc.

President's Message



“Vigorous debate that ends in organizational commitment is the League way.” - *LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara, Convention 2014*

By now, most League members have read one or more summaries of the discussions and actions of the biennial Convention held in June in Dallas. It's energizing to engage in the League process of coming to consensus. It's an example of democracy in action. Through careful study and discussion, members develop sufficient understanding and agreement to make decisions on important issues, or we decide that we cannot come to agreement, and we move on to issues where we can find common ground. By building on agreements, people often find their goals are not so different after all, and progress is made.

It's clear to most Americans that money exacerbates the partisanship and polarization in American politics today. For an excellent investigation of this matter, please consult the Massachusetts League's Campaign Finance Toolkit and Primer on Money in Politics at <http://lwmma.org/money-and-politics-2/>. This study has been adopted by broad League consensus as the highest priority for LWVUS and Leagues across the nation for the next two years. Like David, the League hopes to combat the Goliath of PACs, Super PACs, and others who are taking American democracy hostage. Through educational efforts, we hope to overcome some of the manipulative techniques of those who want the public to feel so cynical about government that they

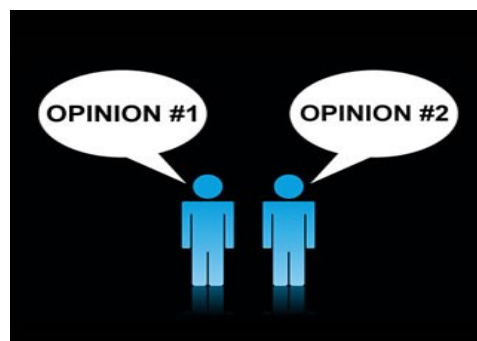
stop participating. What appears to be voter apathy may actually be the result of a sophisticated voter suppression strategy.

League Voter Guides and candidate forums put candidates on equal footing. Sound bites in fancy ads fade when the public sees and hears candidates respond to questions about important issues. Every voice is equal at the ballot box. It is critically important that our electorate be representative of our diverse population and that the governed rather than moneyed interests chose our leaders.

I call upon all League members to reach out to those who might have given up on government, who feel overwhelmed by the growing gap between the rich and the poor and by other challenges facing our democracy. We need members to register people to vote or re-register them if they have moved. We need members to get Voter Guides into the different places where young potential voters, women, minorities, and disabled individuals might go. We need members to encourage neighbors and others to attend candidate forums and to discuss issues that affect our communities. We need observers at government meetings. We also need people to serve on various policy committees related to our positions. We won't give up. We make a difference by modeling how democracy can and should work.

Please contact me or your local League leaders to see how you can help. Thank you.

- Meredith Machen





League Voter Guides and Candidate Forums

In my role as Voter Services Chair, I have the great honor to work with a very dedicated group of individuals in the four local Leagues as we prepare our non-partisan, fact-filled Voter Guides and plan our candidate forums. In July, our hardworking Voter Guide Committees came up with their suggestions for questions to ask candidates for statewide and regional offices, and the LWVNM Board selected the questions that will be asked. Candidates receive our requests to respond to questions and supply their photos, and we are happy to report that we have always had close to 100% participation, though we do have to follow-up several times with some of them. Most candidates know that voters depend on our Voter Guides, which are distributed free in the regions close to our local League offices in Central New Mexico, Greater Las Cruces, Los Alamos, and Santa Fe. All of the local League Voter Guides will also be available through our state website, www.lwvnm.org, in time for early/absentee voting, which begins on October 7.

Information on local and statewide offices will be available by the time we host various candidate forums in September. (Please see adjoining article on state candidate forums.)

In the League's Voter Guides, the public will find information on responsibilities and job requirements and salaries for various offices as well as information about voter registration, voting dates, constitutional amendment

proposals, and other ballot issues. Please help mobilize voters by spreading the word about these Voter Guides by referring people to www.lwvnm.org, which links to all of the local League websites. Please also promote our candidate forums, where they can learn first-hand where candidates stand on issues. Months of work go into making Voter Guides accurate and setting up candidate forums because our primary goal as an organization is to have an informed and engaged electorate. League members know that our democracy is at risk; big money rather than individuals determine the outcomes of elections. We know we must hold candidates and officials accountable to the principle that government can thrive only if it is of the people, for the people, and by the people. For sure, nasty sound bites and mudslinging ads will taint the elections, so we must work hard to counterbalance the hype with clear, nonpartisan, objective information about candidates and issues to help voters make their own decisions and have their voices heard. Let's create opportunities for voters to regain faith in our institutions and their ability to make a difference!

Unfortunately, most eligible voters are not like League members and do not vote. The tactics to suppress the vote are very powerful and effective. Among other negative influences, partisan gridlock has discouraged would-be voters. This is a critical year for us to reach out to those diverse, underrepresented individuals, especially to eligible youth, minorities, low-income individuals, and new citizens who may need help registering to vote, learning about the candidates and issues, and finding out when and where they can vote. Thank you for your commitment to democracy. It's only as strong as we are!

- Meredith Machen

Candidate Forum

State League Works with Local Leagues to Conduct Candidate Forums

By
Dick Mason, VP, LWVNM

The LWVNM has been working with the local Leagues in Greater Las Cruces, Santa Fe County and Central New Mexico to conduct a series of candidate forums. Here is the schedule for the forums:

September 9, 6 to 8 pm, Las Cruces City Hall, 700 Main St.

Candidates for New Mexico Attorney General and the Public Regulation Commission

Live broadcast on local cable channel TV 20

September 16, 6:30 to 8:30 pm, Santa Fe Community College – Jemez Rooms

6401 Richards Avenue

Candidates for New Mexico Attorney General, Secretary of State, and State Auditor

Live broadcast on KSFR – 101.1 FM Radio.

September 23, 6:30 to 8:30 pm – African American Performing Arts Center

310 San Pedro NE, Albuquerque

Candidates for New Mexico Attorney General, Secretary of State and State Auditor

Broadcast arrangements to be announced

Forum is co-sponsored by the African American Performing Arts Center Foundation

These candidate forums are one component of the League's commitment to providing citizens with the information they need to make informed decisions when they vote.

For more information check the LWVNM website: www.lwvnm.org



New Proposed Position on Natural Resources Now Under Discussion

In May of this year, the Natural Resources Committee was directed by the Board to present and discuss their proposed new position with all of the local leagues. These local meetings are being conducted under the newly adopted concurrence process. The proposed position addresses issues of air quality, climate change, energy and mining, transportation, land use, agriculture, and waste management. Thus far, committee members have met with the Los Alamos and Santa Fe Leagues. Additional meetings with Central New Mexico and Las Cruces are scheduled for early this fall. The discussions to date have highlighted the tremendous interest held by members of the League for environmental issues.

-Lee Lockie, Natural Resources Director

Local League News

LWV Central New Mexico

Leading up to summer, CNM hosted a conversation with seven Iraqi government officials. These officials, through the Council on Foreign Visitor Leadership Program, toured the U.S. to learn about transparency in our federal, state, and local governments. They were particularly interested in the League and our civic participation, which is not common in Iraq.

Our annual meeting keynote speaker was Dr. Lee Reynis, Director of the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at UNM. She brought statistics concerning New Mexico's economy and how the state is doing in comparison to others. Dr. Richard Anklam spoke to us at another luncheon about tax policy. We learned that tax expenditures alter the basic tax system by allowing exemptions, deductions, or credits to specific organizations or activities, such as the film industry.

We invited Tobi Ives, Senior Manager of Production, NM State Film Office, to speak on the film industry as a beneficial economic drive for the state. She said that New Mexico gives a 25% tax reduction credit to a film company for every dollar spent in the state. Production companies may also participate in a Film Crew Advancement Program where some New Mexican workers may learn new skills on the job while the company is reimbursed half of that worker's pay, up to a certain number of hours. This is beneficial for both the state and the production company.

We provided timekeepers for two primary forums and supplied our forum policy pamphlet as a guide. Nob Hill Studios live-streamed a gubernatorial debate with Joe Monahan, a local media blogger, and Andrea

Quejada from the Media Literacy Project hosting. Our timekeeper also presided at the New Mexico Black Caucus gubernatorial forum.

The League moderated an education panel discussion on privatization of charter public schools. The panelists were Dr. Sue Cleveland, Superintendent of Rio Rancho Public Schools; Representative Rick Miera, former chair of the House Education Committee; and our own Dr. Meredith Machen, President of LWVNM and Education Chair.

CNM partnered with community organizations and the ACLU in a coalition campaign that will focus on the excessive use of violence by the Albuquerque Police Department. The "APD Forward" campaign objectives are to ensure that the issues raised by the Department of Justice in a letter to Mayor Berry are addressed.

Our CNM members staffed an exhibit table at the National Organization for Women Convention. Dick Mason did excellent work organizing the staff and getting information to attendees on the work of LWVUS and LWVCNM.

-Andrea Targhetta, President

LWV Greater Las Cruces

This spring and summer have been busy times for LWVGLC. Our Education Committee made some waves with their new "For-Profit Virtual Charter Schools: Literature Review and Report," available at www.lwvglc.org. The report was delivered to a number of local and state organizations, including the Legislative Education Study Committee, the Las Cruces Board of Education, and the Las Cruces Superintendent of Schools. Word about this excellent report spread, and we were contacted by US Senator Heinrich's

office and by NM Public Education Commissioners Jeff Carr and Gene Gant for copies. In addition, the Las Cruces Sun-News published a fairly lengthy opinion column submitted by Bonnie Burn, Education Committee Co-Chair, about the study.

Our League was also involved during the last few months with two issues that relate to poverty. The first of these involved the City Council's activities regarding increasing the minimum wage in Las Cruces. The League facilitated community meetings during which considerable citizen input was gathered about the issue. We then monitored the subsequent City Council actions. A proposal for an increase to \$8.50 was passed by a deeply divided Council, but CAFé (a local faith-based group) launched a successful petition drive for an increase to \$10.10, which will be put to the voters in the next election.

The second poverty-related issue we are involved with is predatory lending. Former State Senator Stephen Fischmann, our June "Lunch with a Leader" speaker, explained that predatory lending has a significant impact on keeping low-income individuals in a state of poverty. Senator Fischmann is working to put this issue before both state legislators and City Council. He asked for the League's support.

A recent meeting with the County Bureau of Elections has led to our League's planned participation in a "Voter Registration Fair" on September 20, to be held in one of the popular parks in Las Cruces. The event will have music and free food and will offer the opportunity for new voters to mingle with candidates. The League will have a large table at this event and will be registering voters.

-Erika Graf-Webster, President

LWV Los Alamos

At the Annual Meeting this year, League members adopted an education study that entails a review of the current methods of communication between the administrators of the Los Alamos Public School District and residents. The committee will also recommend options to improve communication and engagement among school administrators and community residents.

Our biennial candidates' forum gave voters the opportunity to meet many of the candidates facing opposition in the primary election. We were assisted by two students from the high school debate team, and more than eighty residents attended. Both early voting and Election Day voting went smoothly. Voters may now cast their ballots at any vote center in the county.

The Board of Public Utilities (BPU) held a hearing in May to decide whether to recommend that the Council adopt tiered water rates for the county. The League supported the new rates based on our finding that tiered water rates are an effective measure to reduce consumption. The County Council subsequently passed an ordinance to implement the program.

Among the League speakers in the past few months, we learned that the probate judge handles only cases where there is no dispute and an original will is filed. All other cases must be heard in district court. Probate Judge Chris Chandler advised the group to inform their heirs about the location of important documents, such as wills, and to include a record of account numbers and real estate holdings. Chandler also reported on her experience during the 2014 legislative session, when she served as an analyst for the Senate Judiciary Committee. The

non-partisan analysts must be attorneys. Their role is to consider the legal issues for bills assigned to the committee.

Another speaker was Tarin Nix, who led the successful campaign to extend the City of Santa Fe's living wage ordinance to Santa Fe County. Now she is working to pass a similar measure in Los Alamos. According to the sustainability position of the Los Alamos LWV, in a sustainable society, "Each individual would live in dignity with a livable wage." The New Mexico minimum wage of \$7.50 an hour is clearly inadequate. While many in Los Alamos are well paid, 4.9% of the population lives in poverty and another 10% are "near poor." In theory a living wage should raise the worker above the poverty level. For Nix the term is flexible; she uses it instead of "minimum wage," which has a negative connotation. She plans to build a working coalition and determine the details of an ordinance through discussion before bringing it to County Council.

-Barbara Calef, President

LWV Santa Fe County

The Santa Fe League has had a busy summer, kicking off in June with a program to educate members about some options for replacing the power currently generated by the San Juan Generating Plant that may provide a better solution than the plan proposed by PNM. LWVSFC Program Director, Judy Williams, organized the program and provided a detailed article for our local Voter. (See article on PNM).

Two programs are scheduled in August. Denise Lamb, former Santa Fe County Director of Elections, and Geraldine Salazar, the current SF County

Clerk, will provide a General Election update discussing voter issues. This program will help gear our members up for the new national Campaign Finance study and update adopted at the national LWV convention in Dallas. The League will also host a meeting with staff and leaders from the Santa Fe Farmer's Market. The League was an early supporter of this excellent local market, which now has a permanent home in the Railyard District.

Santa Fe's Action & Advocacy Committee has been very active on a number of issues. The most controversial issue is a proposed mining operation at La Bajada. The League has been a vigorous opponent based on the cumulative effects associated with the proposed mining operation and negative impacts on the Santa Fe viewshed. Opponents are so numerous that Santa Fe County had to arrange for a separate space to accommodate all the speakers. Our own Chris Furlanetto, LWVSFC Action & Advocacy Chair, spoke early in the June 11 hearing, with over 600 in attendance. Other issues that the League is monitoring and acting on are related to a private contract to increase the graduation rate for Santa Fe Public Schools, transparency issues with the new city administration, and privatization protections for the City of Santa Fe.

Finally, the League's Nonfiction Book Club selection for July was *Flash Boys* by Michael Lewis, a riveting read.

-Donna M. Reynolds, President



What's PNM up to with the San Juan Generating Station?

On May 22 League members were treated to an excellent analysis of the PNM proposal for closing two units of the San Juan Generating Station (SJGS) and an alternative to their proposal. The Public Regulation Commission will hold hearings in late August on the PNM proposal to retire and replace more than 800 megawatts at the San Juan coal-fired power plant by the end of 2017.

Under the PNM proposal the remaining units of the San Juan plant would remain open and burn dirty and expensive coal until 2043, when the plant will be about 75 years old. The Palo Verde nuclear power plant would operate until 2047, when it will be 60 years old. Nuclear power has to run at strength all the time, while natural gas can throttle back, as can coal to a lesser extent. An additional problem is that the California owners of the San Juan plant have to sell, so who will keep the rest going?

The presenter and analyst was David Van Winkle, the Energy Supply Chair for Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy (2010-2014). David is currently also a Board member, Treasurer, and financial/technical advisor for New Energy Economy (2012-2014). Previously he was lead contributor to development of the plan to retire 836 megawatts of coal capacity at the San Juan power plant in 2012.

Van Winkle has obtained a great deal of data directly from PNM and used that and other data to describe the PNM proposal, which would change 30% of the energy that PNM provides to New Mexico customers from coal

to a different source. However, less than four percent of the power would come from renewable energy sources with PNM's plan. They would still rely on coal, a small natural gas plant in the Four Corners, and the Palo Verde nuclear plant in Arizona.

He used the same data to develop a cost-effective alternative that is dominated by renewable energy. Among his arguments were

- Solar can meet peak need (times during the day when the most electricity is used).
- Wind reduces the need for natural gas (the wind blows at night, so it can meet nighttime peak need).
- Renewables don't need 100 percent backup, and they need less than some think.

David Van Winkle and others have been working on an alternative proposal, which will be available after the legal testimony is submitted to the Public Regulation Commission (PRC) in July. The major elements of the alternative proposal are build 40 megawatts of solar trackers; build a 177 megawatt gas plant in Farmington (this would allow a peak supply as well as provide jobs in the area); and provide 78 megawatts of coal from unit 4 of the SJGS, closing the other three. Van Winkle's analysis shows this would actually be a more profitable approach for PNM.

The League is concerned about several aspects of the PNM proposal, including the continued use of large quantities of water and insufficient emphasis on renewables.

*-Judy Williams
Natural Resources Committee*

Program Report

Study

Mental Health Care Services: Under the leadership of co-chairs Shelly Shepherd and Jan Bray, this Study Committee is examining the issues, systems, coverage gaps, and other challenges. The findings of this important study augments our Mental Health position.

Concurrence Method and Process

Thanks to Barbara Calef and others, we have a new process for concurrence. We are using it for the Natural Resources position.

Position Review

Natural Resources: The Natural Resources Committee has developed a new, comprehensive position and is in the process of conducting concurrence meetings with local leagues. Upcoming concurrence meetings will be in Albuquerque on September 11 and Las Cruces on October 20.

Judiciary: We are still looking for a volunteer to review the position and suggest how it can be updated. According to the new concurrence procedures, this position update can be done through a study or concurrence with a position of another League.

Juvenile Concerns: Some of this position might also be applicable to adults. The Mental Health Study Committee members will review the position as part of their analysis and will make recommendations as they complete their study.

Positions History

A compilation of LWVNM positions, when they were enacted, and how they have been used will be available soon. For the positions themselves, please see

<http://www.lwvnm.org/positions.html>

-Judy Williams, Director of Program

Youth Suicide



One of the topics the LWVNM Mental Health Services Study Committee has been researching is youth suicide, which is a public health problem of severe magnitude. New Mexico has the second highest suicide rate in the country, about twice the national average, just after Alaska. In New Mexico, adolescent suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth aged 15-24, with 63 suicides reported in 2012. The number of suicides may be seriously under-reported because drug overdoses, car accidents, and “sudden deaths” are labeled as “accidental” deaths. A study completed in 2013 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the percentage of attempted suicide by teens “held steady” at about 8 percent. Some youth suicide prevention and intervention programs (such as crisis help lines) have had state and federal funding since 2005, and some strategies have been implemented by the NM Department of Health Office and Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) and other agencies, but the statistics for youth suicide in NM have not improved.

We need to continue studying these and related issues in an effort to identify more effective strategies for prevention and funding for the programs that can address these needs.

-Shelly Shepherd, Co-Chair,
Mental Health Services Study

Mental Health Services Study Committee Report



During the May 25 meeting, the committee members discussed the aftermath of the “behavioral health services takeover” that took place last year when the NM Human Services Department accused fifteen New Mexico providers of mismanagement, overbilling, and “possible fraud.” Recent articles were discussed, and study items were divided among the attendees. There was an interest in learning who the current providers are, their responsibilities, and how the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) is affected. Aftercare was discussed as an area to look into, as well as tracking homelessness.

Sen. Bill O’Neill (District 13), who serves on the Behavioral Health Subcommittee, attended the June 26 meeting. He expressed concern that fifteen behavioral health services were put out of business without due process. He has argued for an Extraordinary Legislative Session focused on this situation, which requires three fourths of the Legislature to agree. He said the Governor indicated that she had to proceed this way because “Obamacare” left her no choice.

Sen. O’Neill also serves on many other mental health boards and subcommittees, including the bipartisan committee to revise the criminal code. He discussed the possibility of “geriatric parole” for senior citizens who are not a danger to the public and referred to an [Albuquerque Journal](#) article regarding the need to find housing for the homeless mentally ill following release from jail.

Focusing on the 2015 session, many of the bills that were not passed in 2014 will be proposed again along with others. O’Neill mentioned that Rep. Liz Thompson (District 24) will chair the Behavioral Health Study Committee and that she and Rep. Debbie Armstrong (District 17) are very supportive of working on mental health issues. He also recommended training teachers to spot signs of stress.

Many members of the Committee attended the Behavioral Health meeting with US Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham on June 27. The public provided nearly three hours of testimony regarding disruption, discontinuation of services, and dangerously long waits for services. The professionals who spoke talked about the “climate of fear” among their colleagues in the field. Many dedicated mental health professionals have decided to retire or leave the state. This is a big problem for our veterans who need to receive the professional and experienced service that they deserve.

*-Shelly Shepherd, Co-chair
Mental Health Services Study*



**Initiatives by
Members
Make a World
of Difference!**

A few years ago, LWVSFC members started requesting school board candidates to disclose their campaign contributions to the League voluntarily. This information was posted on the LWVSFC website, making it available so the public could see the specific amounts individuals and businesses donated to school board candidates.

State law required no such transparency in school board elections until a law was passed in 2013. The new law, which will be implemented in 2015, requires campaign finance disclosures from candidates for school boards in districts with enrollment of 12,000 or more and for boards of community colleges and vocational schools. Unfortunately, the law requires that each candidate file only one campaign finance report *after* the election. The original bill called for four reports, three of which would be submitted *before* the election, but in its first committee hearing this requirement was cut to one post-election report.

Inasmuch as the new law requires that the campaign disclosures for school board elections use the same reporting system used by the Secretary of State for other state elections, any changes to the reporting requirements have to be ones that the current reporting system can handle. LWVSFC members have contacted the Secretary of State's Elections Bureau with the goal of learning what changes could be made to require one or more pre-election disclosure reports. Voters need to know the sources of the money behind candidates before they cast their votes.

Many thanks to these inspiring leaders who do not wish to be named! Your diligent work over the decades on numerous issues has led to several of our positions! Your persistence and advocacy has improved government accountability and the lives of thousands of New Mexicans! Members, please share your challenges and successes. We have so much to learn from each other!

-Meredith Machen



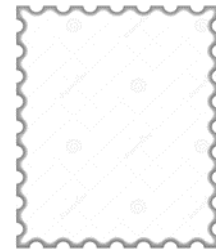
Dec. 15, 2014 – Jan. 16, 2015	Legislation may be pre-filed
January 20	Opening day (noon)
February 19	Deadline for introduction
March 21	Session ends (noon)
April 10	Legislation not acted upon by governor is pocket vetoed
June 19	Effective date of legislation not a general appropriation bill or a bill carrying an emergency clause or other specified date

**SEE LWVNM
2014-2015
CALENDAR ON
BACK COVER**

LWVNM Board meetings are on Saturdays and are open to all members. To add agenda items, please write to leaders@lwvnm.org or contact Meredith Machen at 505 577-6337, president@lwvnm.org. Please note: Packets for the Board meetings will go out at least 3 days before each meeting, so please be sure to send reports and other items 5 days in advance. Thank you.



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LWVNM BOARD CALENDAR 2014-2015

2014

Sept 20 LWVNM Board meeting, Santa Fe, Pasatiempo Center, 11 am – 3 pm
Oct 5-10 Voter Guides published, distributed, and on LWVNM website

Oct 7 Voter Registration Deadline/Early Voting Begins

Oct 31 Absentee Voting Ends

Nov 1 Early Voting Ends

Nov 4 General Election Day

Nov 15 LWVNM Board meeting, 10 am – 1:45 pm, Socorro Public Library

Dec 13 LWVNM Lobbying Workshop, Santa Fe

2015

Jan 17 LWVNM Board meeting, Albuquerque, 11 am – 3 pm,

Feb 9 Mon Legislative Reception, 5:30-7:30 pm, Garrett's Desert Inn

Feb 10 Tues League Day at the Legislature, NM Land Office, 10 am-noon

March 29 LWVNM Board meeting, Santa Fe, 11 am – 3 pm

May 16-17 LWVNM Convention, Albuquerque