



League of Women Voters of New Mexico

La Palabra

www.lwvnm.org

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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.

League at the Legislature

Legislative Reception

Monday, January 27, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Garrett's Desert Inn, 311 Old Santa Fe Trail
(just down the street from the Roundhouse)

Opportunity to meet your legislators and other League members

Panel Discussion:

Tax Fairness in New Mexico

League's Budget Priority: Making NM's Tax System More Progressive

Senator Peter Wirth, District 25, Santa Fe
Richard Anklam, Executive Director/President
New Mexico Tax Research Institute
Bill Jordan, Policy Director,
New Mexico Voices for Children

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League Day, Tuesday, January 28

8 a.m. - Committee Hearings at the Roundhouse

League Program Continues at

NM Land Office, Morgan Hall,
310 Old Santa Fe Trail

8:30 - 10:00 a.m. - Documentary: Inequality for All
Economist Robert Reich about widening income gap
Alternative to attending Legislative hearings

10:30 a.m. - Noon - League Day Speakers
Voting, Campaign, & Ethics Legislation

Viki Harrison, Executive Director, Common Cause NM

NM's Behavioral Health Crisis - Linda Siegle,
National Association of Social Workers-NM Chapter

(Continued on page 2)

**League at the Legislature** *(Continued from page 1)*

The 2014 Legislative Session is limited to budget items, vetoed legislation from 2013, and legislation that the Governor puts on her call. The League opposes the regressive tax policies and loopholes from recent years that have reduced the availability of funds for essential programs. We'll be supporting a number of tax proposals aimed at making New Mexico's tax structure more progressive. Other League priorities for this session include education, behavioral health, and health care funding and policies, driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants, and environmental protection. **Packets of materials will be available at the Reception Monday evening at Garrett's Desert Inn and on Tuesday morning at the Land Office, Morgan Hall.** Members are encouraged to leave LWVNM Fact Sheets at legislators' offices as well as to attend committee hearings and/or House and Senate sessions.

**SPEAKERS - Legislative Reception**

**Senator Peter Wirth** was elected to the NM House of Representatives in 2004 and re-elected in 2006. He was elected to the Senate in 2008 representing Senate District 25, Santa Fe. Over this time, he has sponsored numerous budget reform bills. Peter sits on the interim Legislative Finance and the Revenue Stabilization & Tax Revenue Committees. He also chairs the Senate Conservation Committee and serves on the Judiciary Committee that meets Monday afternoons (and may cause him to run late for the evening of the reception). Peter is committed to working on tax reform bills as long as he is in office knowing that New Mexico needs the valuable dollars we are losing because of numerous tax exemptions, credits, and rebates that are burdening our system. Peter recently won Common Cause NM's "Best in Government Award" because of his ability to work across the aisle and get things done.

**Richard Anklam** is President and Executive Director of the New Mexico Tax Research Institute, a nonpartisan, member-supported organization that analyzes the effects of tax policies on New Mexico and informs the public and policy-makers about taxation issues. Its principles, fact sheets, and publications on tax policy are available at <http://www.nmtri.org>. Prior to this position, Richard spent much of his career working in the arena of state and local taxes including a stint as the Assistant Secretary/Director of Tax Policy for the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department.

**Bill Jordan** is Policy Director for New Mexico VOICES for Children, a nonpartisan organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of New Mexico's children and families. VOICES' Fiscal Policy Project provides timely and credible analysis of budget, tax, and related issues in New Mexico to educate lawmakers. For 15 years, Bill has led VOICES' legislative advocacy efforts in Santa Fe and Washington D.C. He served on Lt. Governor Denish's Early Childhood Action Network and Governor Richardson's Budget Balancing Task Force.

**SPEAKERS - League Day**

**Viki Harrison**, Executive Director, Common Cause, NM, organizes and coordinates legislative programs, conducts research, directs fundraising initiatives, and serves as a lobbyist. Common Cause has been a strong supporter of campaign finance reform on both the national and state levels. Before joining Common Cause, Viki was Executive Director of New Mexico Repeal where she led the successful campaign in New Mexico to abolish the death penalty. Viki has extensive knowledge of the legislative process in New Mexico having successfully lobbied for animal rights, human rights, and citizen advocacy issues since 1997.

**Linda Siegle**, health, education, and civil rights advocate, has represented non-profits and health care associations in New Mexico since 1992 through her firm, Resources for Change. Her clients include the American Cancer Society, NM Nurses Association, NM Nurse Practitioner Council, Occupational

*(Continued on page 3)*

**League at the Legislature - Linda Siegle** *(Continued from page 2)*

Therapist Association, NM Child Care and Education Association, and the National Association of Social Workers-NM Chapter. She has served on the Governing Board of Santa Fe Community College since 1998 and is a very involved volunteer with several non-profit organizations. Linda is also the League's representative to the All Families Matter Coalition that is fighting for equal rights for the LGBT community and for marriage equality in New Mexico.

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**Parking:** The \$8.00 parking fee at Garrett's is waived if you are staying overnight and when you are attending the League Reception.

**Food:** Lunch is "on our own" this year. Santa Fe Bite, the restaurant attached to Garrett's, has a good variety of offerings. You can find descriptions of nearby restaurants on [www.santafe.com](http://www.santafe.com).

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**Let's make our voices heard even more in 2014!  
We make a difference!**

**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act**

**Action Alerts** will be sent out throughout the 2014 Legislative session. If you are not part of the LWVNM Action List, please sign up on [www.lwvnm.org](http://www.lwvnm.org). For more information, please e-mail Dick Mason at [action@lwvnm.org](mailto:action@lwvnm.org) or call 505-239-3804.

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**Important Dates**

January 21 Legislative session opens at noon.  
February 5 Deadline for introduction of bills.  
February 20 Legislative session ends at noon.  
March 12 Legislation not signed by governor is pocket vetoed.

**For more information, please check <http://www.nmlegis.gov/lcs/default.aspx>**



## President's Message

Each New Year fills us with hope that the future will bring better things than we experienced the previous year. While 2013 will go down in history as having the least productive, most partisan Congress, it was also a record year in terms of public demands for justice. Call me Pollyanna but I sense renewed dedication to the principles of American democracy with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the March on Washington, the commemoration of Kennedy's and Mandela's legacies, the Supreme Court's overturning of DOMA and court decisions in numerous states paving the way for marriage equality across the country.

In recent years, LWVNM's capacity to make a difference has increased through networking with activists and other advocacy groups. As we work on statewide issues and their larger national contexts, we are building on the League's reputation as being "as trustworthy as your mother." We have leveraged our successful record of moving public opinion in a number of arenas where we were not in the lead. We have been speaking out whenever and wherever we can in line with our mission and positions. In 2013, we focused on open government, ethics, education, health care including mental health, marriage equality, reproductive choice, voter participation, civic engagement, and environmental stewardship.

Whether working alone or in coalitions, we will keep stressing the critical importance of spending our local, state, and national dollars on health, education, and human services. We will continue to insist on transparency and accountability. We will continue to be totally vigilant about privatization, calling out when we see it undermining the public good. We

will continue to expose the tactics of corporate and special interest groups that want to defund some of our important safety net programs while keeping tax advantages that allow them to keep their exorbitant profits. We insist that it is the responsibility of government to address societal and environmental needs. We continue to educate the public on issues, knowing that voters will choose candidates they can trust and respect to work on behalf of the people.

Elsewhere in this *La Palabra* and in our local League newsletters and websites, you will find information about our work on some of these issues. While our country struggles with the lack of access to decent education, health care, and jobs, some folks want to ignore these needs. We have had to spend some of our energy fighting for human rights that should have been guaranteed by now.

LWVNM is able to work effectively on many of our priorities because we have members who have stepped up to lead or to help. We have opportunities for those who are willing to either carry out bite-sized tasks or take on leadership roles working on policy advocacy. We appreciate those who support us through membership dues and contributions that keep the organization going, and we appreciate those who are able to do more. If you have any spare time or energy, please get in touch with your local League president or me. We need to be prepared for action. We are most fortunate that within the League we have experts with vast experience in the issues we care about. We are counting on our members to come forward if they are willing to represent our positions, so we can better serve our state's residents and defend our hard-won rights and the hallmarks of a strong democracy.

*Meredith Machen*

## Implementing the Affordable Care Act is a Marathon not a Sprint

*Dick Mason, Vice President & Chair of the Action Committee*

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As someone who has advocated for the passage and implementation of the Affordable Care Act, I am disappointed by the glitches in the federal health care exchange web site. But then I remind myself that the implementation of the Affordable Care Act is a marathon and not a sprint. Here are some considerations:

1. The open enrollment period for people to sign up for coverage on the New Mexico Health Insurance Exchange (NMHIX) runs to March 31, 2014. Many expect that to be extended. Enrollment has really picked up on the individual exchange since some of the problems with the federal site have been addressed.
2. New Mexico is running its own business exchange (SHOP). The Hispano Chamber of Commerce and the Association of Commerce & Industry are actively recruiting businesses to enroll in New Mexico SHOP. As of the last week in November, more than 1,074 employers had started the application process. This represents almost 3,000 employees who could enroll through SHOP should their employers finalize the process—a large part of the small group market. When you take into consideration the dependents who might also enroll for coverage, we have an estimated 7,000 potential lives that can be covered through SHOP at this time. Remember, some employers have to wait for their existing health insurance contracts to expire before they can enroll in SHOP.
3. The slow start of the individual NMHIX, because of the problem with the federal site, has allowed Health Care Guides

(those certified to help people enroll in the Exchange & Medicaid) to concentrate on enrolling people in Medicaid. We are having a difficult time getting numbers from the New Mexico Human Services Department, but we know anecdotally that the expansion is going well. There are close to 200,000 low income New Mexicans who are newly eligible for Medicaid.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) is a major step forward for the United States and New Mexico. We have the opportunity, and the time, to ensure health insurance coverage to as many as 300,000 more New Mexicans. The League of Women Voters supported the Affordable Care Act because it was the only comprehensive reform that was politically possible at the time. But the complexity of the implementation of the ACA is directly related to trying to cover large numbers of Americans through the existing private insurance market. Just think of how much easier it would have been if we had just provided sliding scale subsidies for people to enroll in Medicare.

The Affordable Care Act allows states to develop their own health insurance models starting in 2017. Vermont has already passed legislation that would use the funds provided by the federal government to develop a state single payer insurance system. New Mexico should start to consider whether to follow the lead of Vermont.

**I voted for the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, not because I thought it was the best we could do, but because I thought it was a whole lot better than the current system..**

**U.S. Senator Ron Wyden**

## Education Reform

*Bonnie Burn, Member, Education Committee, LWVGLC*

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Is the public education system broken? Some would say "Yes." Some say "Only a business model can fix it." Some say "Online virtual education is the solution." Some say "The crisis in education is manufactured so that private, for-profit companies can gather a piece of the education financial pie (over \$500 billion)." Whatever the answer, Secretary-designate Hanna Skandera has created a stir by instituting new teacher evaluations and standardized tests tied to the Common Core State Standards that barely have been introduced in New Mexico. Above the political fray, the fate of students preK-12 needs to be kept in mind.

The Education Committee of the League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces (LWVGLC) has been working overtime to keep abreast of the issues and to advocate as appropriate using our position on education adopted in 2011.

Las Cruces Public Schools (LCPS) Board member Bonnie Votaw, Ed.D., made a presentation to League members that covered all the bases: introduction of innovative school programs, the role of charter schools, the impact of school reform, and the role of poverty in education.

At a recent LCPS school board meeting, information about New Mexico TEACH, Teacher Effectiveness Evaluation System, was presented. All of the components of the new evaluation system were introduced, causing concern among teachers. The percentages for evaluating each component are fluid. As we go to press, 35 percent of the evaluation is based on assessment of student progress on standardized tests, 15 percent is based on the school's overall A-F score, 10 percent is based on teacher attendance (the number of days a teacher is absent outside those identified in the

negotiated contract), and 40 percent is based on classroom observations and criteria determined by administrators at the building and district level.

The introduction of the new teacher evaluation system resulted in a protest organized by the National Education Association (NEA). The NEA's position is that this actually punishes teachers rather than helps students. League members joined teachers and numerous individuals in the November rally called "Take Back Our Schools." About 400 people attended the Las Cruces event. The rally, which was held in several locations across the state, received broad TV and press coverage.

In anticipation of the 2014 NM Legislative Session, LWVGLC members met with two state senators, John Arthur Smith and William Soules. The League issue for Senator Smith is the source of funding to expand early childhood education (ECE) in NM. Senator Smith does not support funding ECE from the Land Grand Endowment Permanent Fund, but he does support finding recurring funding in the general fund budget. He also supports certification through a two-year program at a local community college for employees who provide child care for pre-kindergarten children.

"Education New Mexico: The Broken Promise" was the title of Senator Soules' presentation to members of LWVGLC. It focused on the loss of funding for public education. At one point, the public education system made up 50% of the state budget. This percentage has decreased to 43% of NM's \$6 billion general fund budget. His main education issues are children living in poverty and early childhood education. He pointed out that there is no socio-economic

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**Public School System,** *(Continued from page 6)*

component in the current value-added model that allocates money for student achievement. He also discussed privatization and its impact on education funding. It is particularly disconcerting that the only options for “free” online “public” schooling in our state are run by for-profit, out-of-state companies with controversial, political agendas. Taxpayers pay all of the tuition and other instructional costs for students attending the NM Connections Academy and the NM Virtual Academy (run by K12Inc), decreasing the dollars available for truly public schools.

The quest for educational equity goes on. To understand the latest issues in education reform, several books are recommended: *One World School House* by Salman Khan, *Reign of Error* by Diane Ravitch, and *The Manufactured Crisis: Myths, Fraud, and the Attack on Public Schools* by David C. Berliner and Bruce J. Biddle.

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**Common Core State Standards***Barbara Calef*

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The National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers led the development of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for kindergarten through twelfth grade. The goal of the CCSS is to prepare students to be “college and career ready” regardless of the state in which they live. To make the American workforce more competitive globally, the CCSS were developed in part using standards of countries where students score highest on international tests. The federal government was not involved in the creation of the CCSS, but it required state participation to qualify for funding for the “Race to the Top” program, President Obama's program for student success, and to get a waiver from the “No Child Left Behind” federal law signed by President George W. Bush. Each state must adopt 85% of the standards. Only Alaska, Texas, Virginia, Minnesota, and Nebraska have chosen not to participate.

Before New Mexico adopted the CCSS, it already had some of the most stringent educational standards in the country, but few students were meeting them, which is in part why the state ranks at the bottom for educational achievement. For example, the tests taken by New Mexico students include

questions requiring written responses that are more difficult than the multiple-choice tests taken by students in other states. Having common standards across the country provides a better way to measure how state systems compare with one another. More importantly, implementation of CCSS will increase rigor in the classroom and help develop higher-level thinking skills.

Currently, the CCSS address only math and English language arts. In math, the emphasis is on technology-based learning. Notably, the standards call for mastery of algebra by the end of eighth grade, rather than the ninth. The focus of the math standards is on application, asking students to solve real problems. English language skills are taught across the curriculum with an emphasis on non-fiction reading comprehension and composing analytical reports. For instance, students in K-5 are asked to write opinion pieces, stating an opinion and giving reasons to support it. The science and social studies standards are still under development. The program will take years to be fully implemented.

The CCSS require lots of collaboration and professional development for teachers, who

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**Common Core** *(Continued from page 7)*

will be able to share lessons and instructional materials. To allow teachers to monitor students' progress, the state will test them at third grade through eleventh grade levels three times each year and also require that they execute a performance-based task each year. Testing will begin next year and will be computerized, but the questions will be open-ended rather than multiple choice. New Mexico has joined many other states in a coalition called Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) that is developing the tests. Each state can determine the required proficiency level.

Some of the problems with the CCSS:

- There is a lot of testing, although some current tests will be discontinued.
- Some of the standards may not be developmentally appropriate, especially for younger students.
- There is no equivalency test for children with special needs.
- The assessments will be on-line and therefore inaccessible for many rural schools.
- Currently, science, social studies, music, and physical education are omitted.
- The process is very expensive.

According to Assistant Superintendent Gerry Washburn, Los Alamos has been involved in the program for two and a half years. Washburn said that most teachers are excited about the CCSS but worried about the demands for the lower grades and the speed with which the evaluation system is being rolled out. He thinks that New Mexico will "leapfrog over other states that have played fast and loose with the standards," but will be below average due to the high incidence of poverty in the state.

Parental participation is expected; therefore, the schools must explain what is expected of them and provide assistance for children

whose parents cannot help. For some children, the standards will be very difficult, but somehow they must be assisted without slowing down those who enjoy the challenge.

In response to questions at a recent LWVLA meeting where he made a presentation on the subject, Washburn said that 94% of Los Alamos students graduate from high school and 90% go on to college. He believes the best way to judge how good a job our school system is doing is to listen to what college freshmen have to say about their readiness for higher education. If Los Alamos teachers are worried, we can only imagine what teachers in high poverty, low-performing schools are thinking and feeling.

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### **Calling All Writers, Compilers, Chatters, and Tweeters!** - *Becky Shankland*

LWVNM has two positions open for people who care about effective idea-sharing and compiling voting information--the heart and soul of the League's mission.

Communications Chair: This is an on-board position, which means attending the six LWVNM board meetings each year that are held in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, or Socorro. That way, you know exactly what the League is doing state-wide, and you'll know all the presidents and other leaders. You'll be assisted by the editor of *La Palabra*, the webmaster, and the president, who will help edit drafts of press releases and fliers. Local League editors, webmasters, and publicity chairs are also invited to be part of your team.

LWVNM Voters Guide Editor: While each local League covers its local election information, the LWVNM Voters Guide Editor gathers information on all state-wide

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# PROGRAM UPDATE

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## Natural Resources

*Barbara Calef, Committee Member*

**Water Supply Concerns:** We are in a protracted drought. What are we doing about it? That has been the subject of a number of recent meetings in New Mexico. Bonnie Burn reported that the NM Legislative Interim Water and Natural Resources Committee heard a panel discussion at their October meeting in Las Cruces about whether to use federal funds to divert water from the Gila River. To date there is no consensus for constructing a major project; environmentalists and others prefer less damaging and less expensive alternatives and oppose exporting the water out of the Gila basin.

The State Engineer, Scott Verhines, explained that the Interstate Stream Commission has developed a new handbook that should enable regional plans to be updated cost-effectively by using a consistent methodology. The first update is to be completed by December 2015. New regional plans, following the same template, will more easily be integrated into an updated state water plan. The Interstate Stream Commission will be requesting additional funding for this project from the legislature.

The Interim Water and Natural Resources Committee met in Santa Fe in November. Steve Vandiver, General Manager for the Rio Grande Water Conservation District, spoke about the program for forming and administering groundwater sub-districts in the San Luis Valley in Colorado where groundwater is the source of water for irrigation. The irrigators wanted to act on their own to counter depletions rather than be subject to inflexible rules devised by the State Engineer in order for the state to meet its contract obligations for downstream delivery.

The first sub-district, which is within a closed basin, includes 3,000 irrigation wells. The members adopted a series of fees for pumping. The revenue will be used to lease or purchase supplies for the river. The fees are set each year depending on need. Purchased lands will be returned to their natural vegetative state. The program serves to streamline the system and minimize the amount of land that needs to be removed from use.

In Colorado, all water rights have been adjudicated, meaning that it is clear whose rights have priority. Groundwater rights are junior to surface water rights. Colorado completed modeling of the aquifer in the area to understand the impact of groundwater pumping and calculate depletions and timing. The precipitating event for the program is the threat of a priority call by the holders of surface water rights. Verhines explained that the NM approach to shortages is Active Water Resource Management (AWRM). However, AWRM is imposed by the state rather than being a grassroots, self-regulated program. Senator Peter Wirth praised the San Luis project as an example of effective regional and community water planning.

## The PRC Votes (Twice) on Renewable Energy Rule

As reported in the Fall 2013 La Palabra, the Public Regulation Commission (PRC) decided to re-consider the Renewable Energy for Electric Utilities rules passed last December. Despite the opposition of many individuals and organizations, including the League of Women Voters, three of the five PRC commissioners voted on November 20 to alter the rules. While they retained the diversification requirements that obligate utilities to include specific percentages of wind, solar, and other types of renewable

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### **Natural Resources** *(Continued from page 9)*

energy in their systems, their new rules allow utilities to receive double the credit for every kilowatt hour of solar they procure and triple the credit for other sources of energy such as geothermal and biomass. This action enabled the utilities to satisfy the requirements by producing less renewable energy. The credit for wind energy, which so far is the least expensive of the renewables, was not changed. Commissioners Patrick Lyons, Ben Hall, and Theresa Becenti-Aguilar supported the changes. Commissioners Valerie Espinoza and Karen Montoya opposed them.

In a surprising reversal, the same three commissioners voted on December 18 to reduce the credit for solar energy so that its value is again equal to that of wind energy. However, they did not return to the earlier rule; utilities will still earn two credits for every kilowatt hour of electricity produced from “other sources” of renewable energy. Commissioner Espinoza, who with Commissioner Montoya voted against the latest change, objected to the lack of transparency in the process.

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### **Mental Health Care Services Study**

*Shelly Shepherd, Co-Chair*

We have a committee of 12 and have had four very productive meetings. We are researching what current diagnostic categories are paid for by insurance, what treatment facilities are available in New Mexico, what standards for treatment exist, and what funding exists currently and prospectively under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). We also are studying methods to expand treatment resources in New Mexico such as telemedicine and teleconsultation and mentoring with local specialists. We are greatly helped by having a psychiatrist, a psychologist, and clinical counselor on our committee.

New members are welcome. The committee meets the fourth Thursday of the month at 5:30p.m. Email Shelly Shepherd at [shelly@shepdesignassoc.com](mailto:shelly@shepdesignassoc.com) if you would like to participate in person or by conference call. Also, let her know if you would like to be on our email distribution. We are using Dropbox for sharing the documents we find.

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### **Marriage Equality**

*Meredith R. Machen, President*

On December 19, the New Mexico Supreme Court affirmed the right of same-sex couples to marry and to enjoy the same legal protections as heterosexual couples. New Mexico joins 16 other states, the District of Columbia, and several Native American tribes in acknowledging the freedom to marry. Well organized advocacy efforts for this basic civil right are responsible for the significant progress of this issue at both the federal and state levels. LWVNM is a proud member of the Equality New Mexico (EQNM) coalition. Members will fight attempts in the 2014 Legislature and in the future to restrict the freedom to marry.

In December, the New Mexico Pediatric Society, the New Mexico Psychological Association, and the New Mexico Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers released a statement in agreement with the American Psychological Association’s conclusion that same-sex couples are just as capable of raising healthy children and building strong families as heterosexual couples. The majority of New Mexicans support the freedom to marry, believing that gay and lesbian couples should be treated fairly under the law and have the same protections, rights, and responsibilities as same-sex couples.

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**Marriage Equality** *(Continued from page 10)*

EQNM has tentatively set January 29 for a press conference and rally outside the Roundhouse. For more information and action alerts during the legislative session, please visit [www.newmexicounites.org](http://www.newmexicounites.org).

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## **A Victory for Reproductive Rights in Albuquerque**

*Diane Goldfarb, Reproductive Rights Chair*

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Despite an early poll that showed a majority of Albuquerque voters favoring a ban on abortions beyond 20 weeks, those same Albuquerque voters rejected such a ban on November 19. By a vote of 55% to 45% the "Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Ordinance" was defeated. An enormous effort by the NM Coalition for Choice, under the banner of Respect ABQ Women, was the key to success. Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains and the NM ACLU were able to raise substantial funds for the campaign, and other member organizations provided additional funding and staff time. LWVNM, while unable to provide financial support, gave many volunteer hours. Albuquerque area members rallied to the cause in impressive numbers by participating in phone banks, canvassing neighborhoods, addressing campaign literature, giving rides to the polls and acting as representative inspectors at the polls on Election Day. Santa Fe County members helped with phone banks organized by Santa Fe NOW.

One important point worth noting is the discipline adopted by the Coalition during the campaign. Member organizations firmly held together and stuck to a focused message. That basic message was that each woman's situation is unique and that no one else can make the decision for her of whether or not to have an abortion. Keeping government out of a woman's personal reproductive health decision is a message that resonates.

Unfortunately, the battle over what is basically the same ordinance is continuing.

On November 20, the Valencia County Commission voted to consider such an ordinance that would apply to unincorporated areas of their county. They have no abortion providers, but those pushing for the ordinance say that it is "insurance" against that possibility in the future. At a public hearing on December 11, a large number of speakers on both sides of this issue turned out. There will be no election in Valencia County; the County Commission will make a decision on whether to adopt this ordinance on January 8.

In addition to challenges at the municipal and county levels around the state, we will, of course, have work ahead at the state level. The governor is expected to have parental notification on her call for the upcoming session, and the Coalition is already beginning to plan action around that.

As expected, the League has experienced some negative consequences as a result of its involvement in the controversial reproductive rights fight. However, the experience in Albuquerque has shown that it also can bring our membership closer together and strengthen it. The achievement in November, as well as the words of support from members, some of whom wrote to say that our involvement in this fight made them proud to be League members, has made it all worthwhile. Thank you to all who have supported these efforts.

**Alone we can do so little;  
together we can do so much.  
Helen Keller**

# LOCAL LEAGUE NEWS

## Central New Mexico (LWVCNM)

*Andrea Targhetta, President*

Petitions were submitted to the Albuquerque City Council to place an ordinance for “Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection” on a special election ballot. This ordinance would have banned abortions after 20 weeks with the only exception being if the mother’s life were at risk. The Central New Mexico League assisted the Coalition for Choice in its campaign, “Respect Albuquerque Women.” We participated in phone banks and a press conference, offered rides to the polls, and worked as watchers on Election Day. We are very proud of our part in helping to defeat this deceptive anti-abortion ballot. This initiative is actually a concern for all women, not only those here in Albuquerque. It’s part of a massive national effort to overturn Roe v. Wade.

CNM heard from Dr. Peter Fawcett, a paleo-climatologist from the University of New Mexico (UNM), in a talk detailing how climate changes in our past have given us information on possible changes in our future. He had data from as far back as 8,000 years to explain the changing climate. Core samples of ice have left us a tremendous amount of information to back up claims that our climate is, indeed, changing. Ninety-seven percent of climate scientists agree that global temperatures are rising,

Lora Lucero, LWVNM’s former Natural Resources Director, also explained why the use of fossil fuel is the main reason our climate is being altered. She stated that the scientific data many times gets lost in political discussions about climate change. A list of suggestions to help mitigate climate change was passed to the attendees. We can

write letters to our legislators, write to local newspapers, attend meetings of the Public Regulation Commission (PRC) when issues on clean energy are on the agenda, perform energy audits of our homes, eliminate meat from our diets, and many more ideas.

Kimberly Samuels-Crow, a UNM Ph.D. student, provided statistics that reinforced the idea that temperatures are rising due to human activities that have increased the concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. These findings are based on a 2013 report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which was established by the United Nations.

Our Albuquerque municipal election was held to select five of our city councilors and the mayor. After the results were in, our League honored all these new officials, the incumbents, and the Bernalillo county commissioners with a reception at Botts Hall in the Special Collections Library. We had great attendance meeting and greeting our officials.

## Greater Las Cruces (LWVGLC)

*Erika Graf-Webster, President*

Public Education and the Las Cruces Public School System have been a primary focus of the LWVGLC for several years. A major study conducted during 2010 and 2011 (see [http://www.lwvglc.org/lwvglc\\_education10.html](http://www.lwvglc.org/lwvglc_education10.html) on our web site) resulted in a position statement that addresses the important aspects of the school system. Since then, the LWVGLC Education Committee has continued to be very active in this area. As a result, our monthly meetings in October and November both featured speakers on education issues. In October, Dr. Bonnie

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Votaw, member of the Las Cruces Board of Education, discussed the quality of the local schools, including charter schools, as measured by student test scores, and the programs in place to improve educational outcomes. She stressed that the most critical factor affecting student success is poverty, which actually affects about 65% of the Las Cruces student population. At the November meeting, Dr. William Soules, New Mexico State Senator, addressed the education issue from the state and legislative perspective. He explained that the New Mexico Constitution mandates that education be sufficiently funded for all children in the state. However, actions of the legislature, special interests and society have resulted in a failure in that obligation. Please also see the report on education by Bonnie Burn (p. 6).

The annual Domenici Public Policy Conference held in Las Cruces on September 18-19 was attended by League members Bonnie Burn and Roberta Gran. The conference addressed a wide range of topics, including U.S. relations with China, the pros and cons of fracking, and health care issues. Governor Susana Martinez was the conference's closing speaker.

October was a busy month for our Voter Services staff as they prepared for the Las Cruces Municipal Elections on November 5. A successful candidates forum was held on October 8, and a *Voters Guide* was published on the same day and distributed to approximately 25,000 households. However, Murphy's law did strike. On the evening of the candidates forum, two additional candidates, who had not been certified by the city clerk, were ruled eligible by Third Judicial District Court Judge James T. Martin. Since this meant that both our candidates forum and our *Voters Guide* were

incomplete, further distribution of the *Voters Guide* was stopped. The City of Las Cruces then scheduled special candidates' forums videotaped separately for the candidates in each district. Bonnie Burn was asked and agreed to moderate these sessions, and they were broadcast live on CCTV (the city's TV station), and repeatedly rebroadcast until Election Day.

On November 6, the League held an all-day retreat. The purpose of this retreat was to get feedback from our members so that we could gain a better understanding of the actual and perceived status of our League. The objectives were to identify potential improvements to the League's structure, its processes and its activities, and to develop an implementation plan for the LWVUS' Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) program. There was agreement among the attendees that this retreat was quite valuable, and would provide good guidance for the League's future planning. A detailed report on the retreat is being prepared and will be circulated to our members.

### **Los Alamos (LWVLA)**

*Barbara Calef, President*

The Los Alamos League is struggling to fulfill its mission with a small, very over-worked board. However, while there are not many citizens in town interested in serving as League leaders, there are many who enjoy attending our events. The October and November lunch programs were especially popular.

At the Lunch with a Leader meeting in October, Susan O'Leary, Utilities Charter Review Committee Chair, reported on the work and recommendations of her committee. O'Leary noted that the residents of Los Alamos are the co-owners of the

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Department of Public Utilities (DPU), an asset that generates about \$80M annually in utility revenue. The DPU is supervised by an independent board (BPU) of five residents, who are nominated by the Los Alamos County Council.

The Council directed the committee to update the section of the County Charter dealing with the utilities department in order to provide greater clarity and to address the changes that have occurred since the Charter was written in 1968. Among other concerns, Council asked the committee to address the lack of a dispute resolution process and the council's limited authority to remove a board member. The committee also was asked to establish a means for adding a utility (such as broadband) to the department. Following numerous public meetings over a period of nine months, in December the County Council approved the changes recommended by the committee.

At the November Lunch with a Leader meeting, Assistant Los Alamos Public Schools Superintendent Gerry Washburn explained the origin and significance of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). His talk is summarized on page 7 in this edition of *La Palabra*.

The League held two consensus meetings this fall. One was for the alcohol abuse study and was led by Jan and Olin Bray from CNM. The other was part of our League's continuing study of land use and transportation and focused on residential neighborhoods. After reviewing the meeting notes, the committee drafted a position that has now been adopted by the board and can be viewed on the website: <http://lwvlosalamos.org/positions.html>.

This is the second land use position adopted by our League. The first, titled Environment, establishes the value of the natural environment to our community. The essence of the new position is that we want our new and redeveloped neighborhoods to be sustainable and livable, meaning they should be designed to minimize sprawl and impact on the natural environment and offer easy access to public transportation.

**Santa Fe County (LWVSFC)**

*Chris Furlanetto, Vice President, and  
Donna Reynolds, President*

**Program:** The topic of our lunch meeting on October 22 was infant mental health and the impact of interventions, including therapy and counseling for infants and their parents. Our speakers were Jane Clarke, co-director of the Santa Fe County Infant Mental Health Team, and Kathleen Benecke, a therapist and founder of the Community Infant Program. They informed us about the Infant Mental Health Team, a collaborative demonstration program addressing the needs of babies and young children in protective custody.

On November 12, we sponsored a public forum on the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in NM. Our expert panel included J.R. Damron, M.D., Chair of the NM Health Insurance Exchange; Dorianne Mason, staff attorney with the NM Center on Law and Poverty; and Justina Trott, M.D., senior fellow and Co-Director of Women's Health Policy at the Robert Wood Johnson Center for Health Policy at UNM. Dede Feldman, the former state Senator, moderated the panel.

**Voter Registration:** One of our members, Lynn Gary, has been coordinating voter registration in local high schools. Lynn's method of scheduling the sessions through senior government teachers has resulted in

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our registering about 80-90% of the seniors! We did brief presentations about the League of Women Voters (LWV), on the importance of voting, and on being a poll worker. Our membership chair, Janet Lincoln, is developing a student membership brochure that could be utilized at these events.

**Action & Advocacy:** In December, the Santa Fe County Commission voted to adopt a Sustainable Land Development Code that will implement the Sustainable Growth Management Plan adopted three years ago. Through the fall, we continued to urge adoption of the code and offered numerous changes to the final draft. LWVSFC has been contributing to the product and the process for several years now, including recommending the use of the League's definition of sustainability as a core value of the plan. The code will go into effect when the zoning map is finalized in 2014.

City voters will be asked to vote on several amendments to the city charter next March. Several policy statements will be on the ballot. Of greatest importance are the proposed amendments that would require an independent redistricting commission and consideration of water availability in development decisions, both championed by the League. The Santa Fe League supported and opposed many of the elements of the proposed amendments where we had a relevant position. We are delighted with the outcome of council deliberations and look forward to educating voters for the upcoming election.

**Other Events:** On a lighter note, a group of our members toured the Santa Fe film studios on October 15. And, our first LWVSFC Book Club meeting was held on November 21.

**MEMBERSHIP:  
Never Miss An  
Opportunity!**



Each and every League member is a membership committee of **ONE**. Be prepared to ask your friend, neighbor, exercise buddy, or member of another group or club to join the League.

Have a membership brochure with you. Never be without one, especially at public meetings. As the TV ad says, "Never leave home without one."

Be enthusiastic and share your personal story—why the League is important to you, and what you have gained from League membership.

Everyone has a special skill or interest. As a member of the League, **YOU** have an impact on your community when you register voters, observe at public meetings, serve on study committees or contact elected officials about public policy that affects all of us.

**Make Democracy Work**

**EXTEND AN INVITATION  
TO JOIN THE  
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS**



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**Calling All Writers** *(Continued from page 8)*

offices as well as state-wide issues such as bonds and constitutional amendments on the ballot. The LWVNM Voters Guide Editor works with a group from the state board to create the questions for candidates for various offices, sends the questions electronically, and compiles the information for the benefit of local Voters Guide editors.

Schedules, procedures, and information are available at LWVNM.org under Member Resources. There you can find the job description for Voters Guide Editor, Guidelines for Voters Guide, and Style Guide for Voters Guide. Meredith Machen guarantees to provide her assistance as an experienced Voters Guide Editor for LWVSFC and for LWVNM for the general election in 2012.

The Voters Guide Editor position can be either on board or off board. Please let me know if you want more information or are interested in filling either of these positions or helping out in any other way. Contact: Becky Shankland, Nominating Committee Chair, LWVNM, 505-672-9105, [rebecca.shankland@gmail.com](mailto:rebecca.shankland@gmail.com)

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