



# La Palabra

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[www.lwvnm.org](http://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.*

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## December 13—Lobbying Workshop in Santa Fe 9 am to Noon



**SAVE THE DATE**

We will hear from legislators and lobbying experts:

Senator Peter Wirth, D-Santa Fe, District 25  
Representative Nate Gentry, R-Bernalillo, District 30 (invited)  
Linda Siegle, government relations and professional lobbyist  
Julianna Koob, government relations specialist and policy advocate

Location will be posted on [www.lwvsfc.org](http://www.lwvsfc.org)

## President's Message



Throughout the summer and fall, all levels of the League--from local to state to LWVUS have been very busy with a myriad of activities related to the mid-term elections. From preparing Voters Guides to conducting voter registration drives, to moderating candidate forums, the Leagues have made a great difference in our democracy.

The goal of increasing the political participation of historically underrepresented populations in our democracy is still a work in progress. When we register people to vote, we are often providing them with their first opportunity to take part in the political process that in many ways governs their everyday lives. We encourage people of all backgrounds and circumstances to let their voices be heard, not just at election time, but throughout the year. We also speak up when public bodies are not being accountable to the people they serve. Please see accompanying article on the Open Meetings Act.

Each election season, we become acutely aware that problems we have tried to address still persist. I'm not just talking about voter apathy, cynicism, and ignorance of issues, though they are grave concerns. The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) became law more than 20 years ago. The NVRA, also known as the "Motor Voter" law, requires the Motor Vehicle (MVD) departments and public agencies that receive federal funds to give people the opportunity to register to vote or to update their voter registrations. Unfortunately, in New Mexico

we continue to have huge problems with compliance with and even basic knowledge of the NVRA. In spite of the Legislature's efforts to streamline voter registrations at the MVDs by offering online services, the numbers of completed voter registrations by mid-year 2014 has fallen by 75% compared to the same period in election year 2012.

The U.S. Department of Justice's settlement agreement with New Mexico (2010) expired this summer, but if we don't see better compliance by MVD and other public agencies that receive federal funds, further NVRA legal action could take place. We need the Secretary of State to augment current efforts to assist state agencies in registering people to vote. After we complained about the situation at MVD in the spring, we received a letter from Secretary Padilla of the NM Taxation and Revenue Department assuring us that the problems would be addressed. However, the numbers of voter registrations completed at MVDs slipped even further in the second quarter of the year. We will continue to work on this problem after the election.

On a more positive note, please see the inspiring news about Santa Fe's independent redistricting commission, progress on improving health care coverage through the implementation of the Affordable Care Act in New Mexico, and information about League Days at the Legislature and the LWVNM Convention in May.

Many thanks to all who contributed to this issue and to all of you who are working to develop a stronger democracy by getting out the vote! Without good turnout, we can't have a representative democracy, reflective of our values and priorities.

*- Meredith Machen*



## League of Women Voters Candidate Forums for State Offices

The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces, Santa Fe County, and Central New Mexico conducted three candidate forums for those running for statewide office.

On September 9, the Las Cruces League conducted a forum that included the candidates for New Mexico Attorney General and the Public Regulation Commission-District 5. This was broadcast live on local cable channel TV 20.

On September 16, the Santa Fe County League conducted a forum that included the candidates for New Mexico Attorney General and Secretary of State. It was recorded by KSFR – 101.1 FM Radio and later broadcast. Santa Fe forum press coverage focused on the marijuana ballot question for the Secretary of State candidates (the issue was resolved by the NM Supreme Court a few days later), but many other interesting questions were posed to all four candidates.

On September 23, the Central New Mexico League co-sponsored a forum with the African American Performing Arts Center Foundation. The forum included candidates for New Mexico Attorney General and Secretary of State. That forum was recorded by KUNM – 89.9 FM and broadcast the morning of September 25.

Questions for the Secretary of State included these:

Do you believe voter fraud is widespread?

Is there adequate policing of campaign contributions and expenses? What would you do to improve it?

Would you support or oppose an independent ethics commission, and what functions would be transferred from your office?

Should League Voters Guides be available at polling places?

Questions for the Attorney General included these:

How would you balance the interests of PNM rate payers and environmental protections for all New Mexicans?

How should the AG deal with the behavioral health audit and the closing of 15 clinics?

How would you work to protect consumers from scams, misleading and false advertising and harassment by telemarketers?

What is the role of the AG in rooting out corruption in the state? What would you do?

Although the attendance at these forums was less than we wished, the fact that they were broadcast by the media and available for download means we reached a much wider audience.

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.

- Dick Mason  
- Judy Williams

## Transparency Needed--Not Rolling Quorums

The League of Women Voters has an official position about and strongly supports the NM Open Meetings Act, also known as the “Sunshine Law.” Unfortunately, we find quite a few situations where officials suddenly vote in favor of a proposition that has not been discussed in open meetings. Such actions strongly suggest private collaboration or collusion.

The NM Open Meetings Act Compliance Guide published by the NM Attorney General states that “The formation of public policy or the conduct of business by vote shall not be conducted in closed meetings.” Further, the law declares that any meeting at which public policy is discussed and voted on by local legislative bodies is a “public meeting open to the public at all times.” The agenda of all public meetings must be properly noticed so that people can attend. Because it is illegal to have members of the public bodies meet privately on issues, they are careful not to do so. However, it appears that the use of “rolling quorums” may be increasing. These are situations where discussion of public business is done serially by phone or email, where one member of a public body contacts another, who then contacts a third, and so on. The use of a rolling quorum to discuss public business or take action violates the Act because it constitutes a meeting of a quorum of the public body’s members outside of the properly noticed public meeting.

The motto of the League of Women Voters is “Making Democracy Work.” One of our most important responsibilities is to hold government accountable and responsive to the public. Not only do we speak up on issues based on our positions, we will continue to monitor processes at public meetings with particular vigilance regarding the adherence to the Open Meetings Act to make sure democracy is not suppressed. The LWVNM Transparency Position, which urges state and local government entities to go beyond the letter of the law in promoting open government, is posted on <http://www.lwvnm.org/positions.html>. Please read it for examples of best practices in ensuring transparent, inclusive processes in the conduct of the public’s business.

By: Erika Graf-Webster, Jody Larson  
Meredith Machen, Andrea Targhetta

***Transparency in government has always been a basic premise of the League of Women Voters. The business of government is supposed to be transparent and accessible to the public.***



***In New Mexico, the Open Meetings Act (OMA) and the Inspection of Public Records Act (IPRA) are the foundations of our legal protections from secrecy in government at the state and local levels.***

## Local League News

### LWV Central New Mexico

LWVCNM hosted Kristina Kutemeyer and Tracy Smith for a talk on Project ECHO, which is similar to telemedicine but much more comprehensive. In telemedicine, the primary care doctor receives information regarding care for a patient via teleconferencing with a colleague. With Project ECHO, the conferencing is not only with a colleague but with a team of specialists who co-manage patient cases with mentoring, guidance, feedback and education over an ongoing period of time. The primary care doctor receives knowledge to treat complex diseases in patients and develops skills as well. These skills enable him/her to treat these diseases in their own communities, eliminating travel, wait times, and avoiding possible complications.

We attended two Naturalization Ceremonies in June and July and helped over three hundred new citizens register to vote. LWVCNM gives the voter registration forms out, and the Bernalillo County Clerk's Office helps the new citizens fill out the forms after the ceremonies.

We hosted a Voter Registration Day on September 23 just before our Candidate Forum for the offices of Secretary of State and Attorney General. The Forum went extremely well and was on the front page of the [Albuquerque Journal](#) and rebroadcast on KUNM radio on September 25. Our Candidate Forum for the office of Bernalillo County Sheriff was on October 2.

Our newly formed Westside unit heard David Esparza talk about water rights and the brackish water found in the Rio Rancho area. Water is becoming much more expensive due to diminishing supply and the need to drill

further down to get it. Often the water is contaminated and needs to be purified, which also adds to the cost.

Pam Harris, our Voter Services Chair, registered high school students who will be 18 by the November election. Our *Voters Guide* will be available the first week in October before early voting begins. We have a long list of people who have volunteered to distribute the Guide, which is already up on our website.

*-Andrea Targhetta, President*

### LWV Greater Las Cruces

LWVGLC decided to focus on four advocacy priorities this fall after committee, study and interest area chairs proposed their recommendations: Affordable Housing, Education, Water, and Health Care. We plan to put together information packets about these issues and visit local legislators in person to explain the League's concerns and requests.

At the August 11 Lunch with a Leader, our speakers were Sharon Thomas (City Mayor Pro Tem Emerita and League member) and Jack Valencia, Project Manager for the South Central Transit District, who gave a presentation of the regional transportation facilities that had been put in place as a demonstration project. A bond issue will appear on the November ballot – if it passes, a permanent regional transit system will be developed, linking cities and towns in Doña Ana, Sierra, and Otero Counties.

Julia Brown, Esq., Doña Ana County Manager (and national AAUW Vice President), spoke to us about the state of the county at our September 8 Lunch with a Leader. Since she took this position nine

months ago, she has reorganized county staff for greater flexibility. She described a positive outlook for the county's economic future.

Voter Services activities have kicked into high gear. We started with a Candidate Forum on September 9 for Attorney General and Public Regulation Commission District 5. The October 7 forum is devoted to county candidates (commissioners, judges, sheriff, assessor), and the October 14 forum will feature the NM House of Representative candidates. All forums are televised and rebroadcast repeatedly until Election Day. We are very pleased that, for the first time, we are offering simultaneous Spanish translation to forum attendees.

Our Voters Guide will be published in the *Sun-News* Sunday, October 5, issue. As in 2012, a Spanish version of the Voters Guide will also be published.

On September 17 and 18, several League members attended the Domenici Institute's Public Policy conference. The lineup of speakers was excellent, and included Leon Panetta, former Secretary of Defense and Director of the CIA; Mary Wilson, former LWVUS President; Charlie Black, Republican strategist; Donna Brazile, Democratic strategist; and both NM gubernatorial candidates.

On September 20, the League participated in the "Election Fest" sponsored by the Doña Ana County Elections Bureau. It really was a festival! One of the local radio stations was broadcasting live. There were live dancers doing both country and salsa dances, mostly performed by children (some with big swirling skirts). There were free hot dogs and games for the kids. There were booths for the County Elections Bureau and for Democratic and Republican parties, and many new voters

were registered. About 300 people attended and seemed to have a great time.

*-Erika Graf-Webster, President*

## LWV Los Alamos

Los Alamos has a new police chief, Dino Sgambellone, who moved here from Mansfield, Ohio, early this year and is happy to be working in a small town with adequate resources after leaving the Rust Belt. At Lunch with a Leader (LWL) in July, the Chief said that the crime rate in Los Alamos is low, and the department is able to solve 60% to 70% of the crimes. The most common crimes are theft and drug-related offences, especially consumption of heroin and prescription drugs. He would like to expand Teen Court to hear more serious offenses and would like to see more special courts deal with social issues.

The LWL speaker in August was Los Alamos Monitor publisher Ben Carlson, who expressed appreciation for the League's non-partisan stance on politics. According to Carlson, the Monitor is widely read, which helps to raise revenue from advertisers. In response to a question, he said there are no non-profit newspapers, except for one run by a foundation. Carlson also commented that some people only care about the news in the paper and others only care about the advertising, especially the supplements that are stuffed in each edition. For legal reasons, the paper is required to destroy all supplements; one coupon-hungry reader used to appear behind the Monitor office to try to nab the supplements from the Sunday paper before they were destroyed.

Recent County Council meetings have been focused on Utility Department issues. After years of discussion and hearings, the Council

voted to implement tiered water rates. They also agreed to postpone further decisions about utilizing our San Juan/Chama water rights until after the completion of a new 40-year Water Plan next year. Finally, the Council heard a report about the San Juan Generating Station (SJGS). With the retiring of two of the four units at SJGS, four of the original nine owners are withdrawing, leaving five owners, including Los Alamos County. This restructuring requires a new agreement on the disposition of the existing coal inventory and the sharing of the costs of the required modifications to the remaining units. Council voted to approve the preliminary agreement.

The League's local election activities this season include production of the Voters Guide, voter registration at the Farmers Market, work on a mailer about two proposed amendments to the County Charter, and four candidate forums.

*-Barbara Calef, President*

## LWV Santa Fe County

Voter services activities are underway! LWVSFC is working to publish a lengthy Voters Guide in partnership with the Santa Fe New Mexican newspaper. Our League will host a candidates' forum for the 3rd Congressional District candidates in October. The League is also registering high school students through our school program as well as encouraging those age 16 or over to consider serving as poll workers for the upcoming general election.

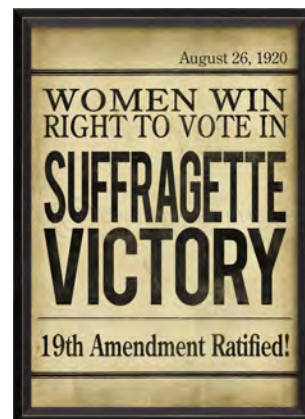
In mid-September, the Santa Fe League hosted a Public Banking Forum that was very informative and interesting. The City of Santa Fe is exploring a public bank, so it is extremely helpful to have more information and background. Craig Barnes (author,

playwright, lecturer, mediator and essayist) and New Mexico Representative Brian Egolf described the history and experience of public (or community) banking, and discussed the possible role of public banks in funding community programs. A big thanks goes to Santa Fe's Program Chair, Judy Williams, for the wonderful job of setting up this lively and needed program.

In late September, the Santa Fe League hosted a Santa Fe Community Convention Center tour. Members toured the facility, which has a number of sustainable building features, and met with the new chief executive officer, Randy Randall. Mr. Randall has been working to secure the "Bachelor" show for a Santa Fe venue. It now appears that the show will come to Santa Fe to shoot a February episode. Leaguers learned more about how the Convention Center works to attract conferences and events.

The local League's October nonfiction book club will read The Robert's Court, authored by Marcia Coyle, the fascinating story of recent Supreme Court rulings that are impacting the nation.

*-Donna M. Reynolds, President*



## Independent Redistricting Commission in Santa Fe – A Statewide Model?

The Santa Fe City Council recently passed a resolution that opens the way for the city's first Independent Citizen Redistricting Commission. This Commission will be the first in New Mexico to allow citizens, rather than elected or appointed officials, to redistrict an area.

In March, the voters approved a charter amendment that called for such a Commission. That amendment was proposed by the League of Women Voters of Santa Fe County (LWVSFC) and supported by Common Cause New Mexico.

The resolution also calls for an additional redistricting to take place before the March 2016 election so that new districts will be in place by June 2015. This effort will rectify the situation where one district has twice the population of the other districts because the city annexed 4100 acres with approximately 13,000 residents in January 2014.

The charter requires the Redistricting Commission to follow certain rules in drawing up the new districts. These are



- Each district shall contain as nearly as possible substantially the same population based upon the most recent federal census.
- Districting plans must avoid dilution of minority voting strength.
- Communities of interest, including those based upon ethnic and economic factors, shall be preserved within a single district whenever reasonable.
- Each district shall be formed of compact, contiguous territories. The total length of all district boundary lines shall be as short as possible.
- Districting plans shall compensate for census undercount of minorities.

The exact plans for the selection and composition of the Redistricting Commission are still being formulated, but the ordinance laying out those details will be introduced to the City Council soon.

The LWVSFC hopes that this Commission will serve as model for other governmental entities in New Mexico.

*-Karen Heldmeyer, LWVSFC Action Committee  
Former Santa Fe City Councilor*



## LWVNM Candidate Forums



Maggie Toulouse Oliver and Dianna Duran  
Candidates for Secretary of State



Hector Balderas and Susan Riedel  
Candidates for Attorney General

Maggie Toulouse Oliver and Dianna Duran  
Candidates for Secretary of State

Diane Goldfarb, Moderator

*Photos by Brenda G. McKenna*

Hear the candidates for Secretary of State and Attorney General spar in the League forum held in Albuquerque on September 23.

<http://kunm.org/post/special-coverage-nm-secretary-state-attorney-general-candidates-face>



**Please spread the news!**

**Help voters make informed decisions!**

The League's Voters Guides are posted on [www.lwvnm.org](http://www.lwvnm.org) and distributed free in public venues across Central New Mexico, Greater Las Cruces, Los Alamos, and Santa Fe. See nonpartisan, objective information about the ballot questions and learn where candidates stand on issues.

Thanks to all who help to get out the vote! Without good turnout, we can't have a representative democracy, reflective of our concerns and priorities.



## What's happening now with the deal on the San Juan Generating Station?

The members of the LWVNM Natural Resources Committee were expecting to be sending letters and attending hearings this fall as the PRC heard the PNM proposal for replacing the electricity generated by the two units of the San Juan Generating Station that are scheduled for closure. (For details please see my article in the summer issue of *La Palabra*.)

However, PNM and the Public Regulation Commission (PRC) staff reached an agreement to accept the PNM proposal for replacing that coal power with a mix of gas, nuclear, coal, and solar (in that order). On September 17, the PRC issued a decision to cancel the hearings scheduled for this fall. On October 1, PNM filed its new settlement proposal, agreed to by the PRC staff, the Attorney General's office, and several organizations who were interveners in the case. Following a meeting in early October, a hearing has now been scheduled for January 5, 2015.

### PNM proposal:

- Add 134 MW of nuclear power into customer rates from PNM Resources' (PNM's parent company) owned share of Palo Verde 3 (PV3) in Arizona at a cost of \$21 million.
- Add 132 MW of coal power, purchased from California utilities (at no cost to PNM but PNM would charge ratepayers \$26 million) in San Juan unit 4

### PNM's plan results in:

- Palo Verde 3 nuclear operating for a total of 60 years until 2047
- San Juan coal operates until 2053
- Unit 1: 1976 to 2053 = 77 years
- Unit 4: 1982 to 2053 = 71 years

Continued operation of nuclear and coal preclude any significant amount of renewable energy for the next 30 years.

Note: 40 MW of solar has been approved under a separate case.

*Source: New Energy Economy*

Several other interveners remain opposed to the PNM proposal on the grounds that it continues costly reliance on coal and nuclear power and doesn't offer ratepayers access to sufficient renewable power built on newer technologies.

The PRC staff, in its submittal testimony, stated that they know of no public opposition to the coal or nuclear energy solutions. Many organizations strongly dispute this, as does much of the public, as demonstrated in a 2014 survey of registered voters by Colorado College. That survey showed that just 1 in 5 Americans today say that making electricity from coal is a good idea. By contrast, 84% say wind and 91% say solar are good ways to produce our electricity. By nearly two-to-one, Americans say we should be investing more in energy efficiency and renewable sources such as wind and solar rather than in coal, oil, and gas. Even the idea of fully transitioning the U.S. from fossil fuels to renewables within

the next 15 years garners majority support. Across six interior western states, 72% of voters say they are more likely to vote for a candidate who promotes more use of renewable energy like wind and solar. In New Mexico, 56% of voters said they wanted the state to develop more solar power, 43% said they wanted more wind power and 31% said more natural gas. Just 11% wanted more investment in nuclear and 8% in coal. (<http://green.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/02/08/in-the-rockies-growing-support-for-renewables/>).

The League continues to oppose the plan, at least in part because of the over-reliance on fossil fuels and the under-reliance on renewables, and in part because of the billions of gallons of water used annually in coal and nuclear facilities. A study by New Energy Economy and others says the market for renewables is growing as costs drop, and New Mexico is in a prime position to benefit from this trend - a combination of solar, wind, and gas is a cheaper replacement power package than coal and nuclear, especially since the nuclear energy would be produced out of state. Furthermore, there is little environmental risk with solar and wind, but there are enormous environmental liabilities associated with coal and nuclear fuels.

What can League members do? As a voter, you can write to the PRC as a whole or to your commissioner. Use the points made here or additional ones if you like. It isn't clear yet what the procedure will be for comments, but now is a good time to start.

The reference to cite when you write is Case No. 13-00390-UT. Use this link to find your district and representative:  
<http://www.nmprc.state.nm.us/commissioners/index.html>

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District 5: [Ben.Hall@state.nm.us](mailto:Ben.Hall@state.nm.us)



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

**Webmaster:** We need a special person to take over the critically important role of webmaster of [www.LWVNM.org](http://www.LWVNM.org). Cheryl Haaker has been doing the job for years and wants a break. She promises to help and support whoever takes over this key position. Unlike the local League websites, maintaining the current website is not a huge job, but we are also thinking we might want to change it if the right person comes along. The state League website is the repository of member resources, including our positions, policies, publications, and advocacy efforts.

**Communications Chair:** Get to know exactly what the League is doing statewide and help us get the news out. You'll be assisted by the president and other leaders who will help draft and edit press releases and fliers. While we prefer the Chair to be an on-board position (which means attending most of the six LWVNM Board meetings each year), we also invite others to apply.

Please let me know if you are interested in filling either of these positions or if you just want more information. Thank you for helping out in any way you can.

Meredith Machen, [president@lwvnm.org](mailto:president@lwvnm.org),  
505-577-6337

## **Cost-Effective Options for Increasing High School Graduation and Improving Adult Education (Excerpts)**

According to the U.S. Census, more than 220,000 adults in New Mexico lack a high diploma or equivalent. The Census reports 14 percent of adults over the age of 24 and below age 65 lack a high school diploma. Each additional high school graduate produces roughly \$267,000 in net benefits. Using New Mexico data, the Pew Results First cost benefit model suggests each high school graduate in New Mexico produces considerable net benefits, including \$100,000 to taxpayers and other beneficiaries and \$178,000 to participants, compared to non-graduates. If New Mexico were to increase the state's four-year graduation rate by 10 percent, an additional 2,600 students annually, the state would experience net benefits of about \$700 million for each cohort year increase over the lifetimes of the students. These benefits come primarily from increased earnings, crime reduction, and healthcare benefits. New Mexico can increase the number of students who graduate annually by reducing the number of students who drop out before completing high school. Despite improvements in graduation rates, the large numbers of students dropping out impedes New Mexico from reaching graduation targets. While the state's four-year graduation rate has improved in recent years, New Mexico's dropout rate has increased slightly from 3.6% in FY08 to 4.7% in FY13.

The National Governors Association (NGA) estimates each adult who does not complete high school costs the public more than \$200,000 over the course of their lifetime as a result of decreased tax payments, increased public health costs, increased costs related to crime, and welfare costs. The NGA reports taxpayers could save \$45 billion annually if the number of high school dropouts were cut in half. Adults who lack a high school credential are significantly more likely to rely on public assistance and generate income far below the median annual household income in New Mexico. Failing to complete high school is associated with negative employment and life outcomes. Additionally, adults without a high school diploma are much more likely to live in poverty, more likely to become incarcerated at some point in their lives, and tend to be less healthy than adults with a high school credential (Burrus & Roberts, 2012). The median annual income of adults without a high school credential in New Mexico is \$17,000, roughly \$14,000 less than the state's median income. Income among females without a high school credential is considerably less—\$12,000 annually. Adults who possess a high school credential or an equivalent earn a median income of \$25,000 annually.

**Charter schools provide alternative school options for students but also account for a large proportion of New Mexico's dropouts and are expensive to operate.** Charter schools may offer at-risk, as well as achieving students, academic opportunities that traditional schools typically do not offer. Charter schools may re-engage students who have disengaged from traditional learning institutions or offer students a self-paced, mastery based learning experience, allowing students to recover credit for a year-long course in as little as a few weeks. However, several charter schools targeting at-risk students produce outcomes similar to alternative schools, with low graduation rates and large numbers of dropouts.

Reengaging adult students over the age of 22 through the K-12 public school system is not a cost-effective recovery strategy. Statute currently allows public schools to enroll and claim funding for adult students, though federal special education laws limit the provision of services to students age 22 or younger.

Several school districts and charter schools visited by the LFC indicate they will prepare certain students to take the GED if the student is not likely to graduate high school with a diploma. Students remain enrolled in the school district or charter school as they prepare for the GED, counting toward the district's formula funding. Students must, however, drop out prior to taking the GED. New Mexico's funding formula allocates funds intended to offer a comprehensive high school education. GED preparation is not a comprehensive high school education because students prepare for a series of tests, as opposed to earning credits in various subjects and electives.

High school equivalent exam preparation courses are already funded through the adult basic education system, and students over the age of 16 are eligible for these programs. However, **students completing preparation for a high school equivalent exam in the state's public school system generate roughly fifteen times the funding allocated per ABE student preparing for a high school credential equivalent.** State statute is ambiguous on whether or not a qualified student must be preparing to receive a high school diploma, as opposed to preparing to take a high school equivalent exam, to count in a school district or charter school's formula funding.

Recommendations: The Legislature should

- Limit the age at which students may be counted in the state's funding formula to age 22.

- Prohibit public schools and charter schools from enrolling new adults or re-enrolling students over the age of 22 in FY16, and prohibit public schools and charter schools from claiming adults over the age of 22 in their MEM beginning in FY19. This would grandfather in adults who are in the process of earning a high school diploma.

- Reprioritize a portion of the funds generated by adults over the age of 22 in the state's funding formula to the adult basic educational program administered by the Higher Education Department.

- Clarify in statute the purpose of a public high school is to prepare students for high school graduation by completing the state's high school graduation requirements, and prohibit students enrolled in a high school equivalent exam preparation program administered by a public school or charter school from being counted in the school district's formula funding.

*The excerpts above were taken from **Legislative Finance Committee-Cost-Effective Options for Increasing High School Graduation and Improving Adult Education, September 25, 2014, Public Education Department and Higher Education Department, Report #14-09***

<http://www.nmlegis.gov/lcs/lfc/lfcdocs/perfaudit/Public%20Education%20Department%20and%20Higher%20Education%20Department%20-%20Cost-Effective%20Options%20for%20Increasing%20High%20School%20Graduation%20and%20Improving%20Adult%20.pdf>

## Progress on Implementing the Affordable Care Act in New Mexico



The open enrollment period for purchasing plans on the New Mexico Health Insurance Exchange (NMHIX) runs from November 15, 2014, to February 15, 2015. This period is for people who want to buy their coverage on the Health Insurance Exchange. It does not apply to employers who want their employees to participate in the SHOP (separate business exchange) or to Native Americans. The open enrollment period also does not apply to people who have lost their insurance coverage due to events such as loss of job or divorce.

New Mexico had 32,500 people purchase insurance through the NMHIX. This is less than 20% of the people eligible to participate. Starting in late August the NMHIX has a new CEO, Amy Dowd, the former CEO of the Idaho Health Insurance Exchange. The Idaho Exchange enrolled 82,000 people in their Exchange, and they have a population of 1.5 million, half a million less than New Mexico.

The Affordable Care Act also allowed states to expand Medicaid to low income adults who do not have children. Governor Martinez opted for New Mexico to participate, and this has led to 150,000 New Mexicans who are newly enrolled in Medicaid. Another 50,000 enrollments are expected by the end of 2015.

If New Mexico is able to increase its enrollment in the NMHIX to the percentage levels reached by Idaho and reach the Medicaid enrollment goals set by the New Mexico Human Services Department, the state's percentage of uninsured can be reduced to single digits by the end of 2015.

If you, or someone you know, qualifies for Medicaid or to purchase insurance through the NMHIX, encourage them to contact the NMHIX at 1-855-996-6449 or visit the NMHIX website at [www.bewellnm.com](http://www.bewellnm.com)

*- Dick Mason, LWVNM Representative  
on the NMHIX Stakeholders Advisory Committee*

**LWVNM's Legislative Reception**  
**Monday, February 9, 5:30-7:30 pm**  
**Desert Inn, 311 Old Santa Fe Trail**  
**(just down the street from the Roundhouse toward the Plaza)**

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The 2015 Legislative Session should be more productive than last year, with mid-term elections over and \$285 million in “new money” for FY 2016. Education and the economy are the hottest topics. We’ve lined up Representative Dennis Roch (R) and Representative Mimi Stewart (D), Legislative Education Study Committee leaders, and Don Moya, Chief Financial Officer for Albuquerque Public Schools, as panelists at our Legislative Reception. **Come meet with legislators to discuss priorities and learn more about the issues.**

**Accommodations:** Garrett’s Desert Inn once again is offering us a very **special rate of \$59 plus tax for single occupancy or \$69 for double occupancy and waiving the \$8 parking fee.** Reserve your space under the code “**SWING VOTE**” to take advantage of this rate. After the January 25 cut-off date, rooms will cost \$99 for a single room if space is available. Call **1-800-888-2145** to make a reservation with a credit card or advance deposit. Be sure to mention the code.

We’ll be sending out email Action Alerts before, during, and after the 2015 Legislative session. If you are not part of the LWVNM Action list, please go to [www.lwvnm.org](http://www.lwvnm.org) and sign up.

**Details about the activities for League Day, February 10, will appear in the Winter *La Palabra*, in local League publications, and on the website.** Topics and speakers have yet to be decided. If you have ideas, send them to [leaders@lwvnm.org](mailto:leaders@lwvnm.org). Thanks.

*-Meredith Machen*





**League of Women Voters of NM**  
**2315 San Pedro NE, Suite F-6**  
**Albuquerque, NM 87110**

## **LWVNM BOARD CALENDAR 2014-2015**

### **2014**

- Oct 7-Nov 1 Early Voting, Voter Guides at [www.lwvnm.org](http://www.lwvnm.org)  
**Nov 4 General Election Day**  
Nov 15 LWVNM Board meeting, 10 am –1:45 pm, Socorro Public Library  
Dec 12 Deadline Winter La Palabra articles (email to [president@lwvnm.org](mailto:president@lwvnm.org))  
Dec 13 LWVNM Lobbying Workshop, Santa Fe

### **2015**

- Jan 17 LWVNM Board meeting, Albuquerque, 11 am – 3 pm,  
Jan 20 Legislative Session begins (noon)  
**Feb 9 Legislative Reception, 5:30-7:30 pm, Garrett's Desert Inn**  
**Feb 10 League Day at the Legislature, NM Land Office, 10 am-noon**  
March 21 Legislative Session ends (noon)  
March 29 LWVNM Board meeting, Santa Fe, 11am –3 pm  
April 2 Deadline for Spring La Palabra, CONVENTION ISSUE  
May 15 LWVNM Convention Reception, Albuquerque  
**May 16 noon--May 17 noon, CONVENTION, Albuquerque**