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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.

The President's Corner

By Hannah Burling
LWVNM President president@lwvnm.org



The death last week of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, that persistent, patient, thoughtful, and heroic fighter for equal rights, is a great loss. At a time when democracy seems to be an endangered species, it comes particularly hard to lose such a champion. She created great changes and I believe we can build on her work.

In the final few weeks before the most extraordinary election in recent history, we continue to fight voter suppression in ways we never dreamed of. All of the usual difficulties face New Mexican voters: gerrymandered districts; little to no internet access in much of the state, which becomes little or no access to voter information; the difficulty of registering with rural or no addresses; distance; lack of education. Added to these is the COVID-19 pandemic, which has resulted in fewer voting locations, and the fear of infection, which will keep many from voting in person. There is increased misinformation and disinformation. Cybersecurity is an ongoing and never-ending problem. Fortunately, recent Post Office policies that would slow the mail down and make it more difficult for citizens to exercise their right to vote have been rolled back.

Throughout all of this, we persist in our work of education and advocacy to keep voting accessible. Thanks to Diane Goldfarb and her team of indefatigable volunteers, our new Vote411 online guide went live on September 15th. We are covering the entire state for the first time, and it has been an enormous amount of work. We have been able to have some of Vote411 translated into

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LWVNM Position on Primary Elections Needs Consideration

By Barbara Calef

The issue of who participates in primary elections will undoubtedly be debated during the next legislative session, so this is a good time for the League to consider whether our position will allow us to weigh in. Most of the Temporary Election Changes Act (SB4), passed during the Special Session in June, will expire at the end of 2020. However, the first part, Section 1-4-5.7 NMSA 1978, will remain law unless it is amended by the legislature. That section concerns voter registration during early voting and on election day during a primary election. It says that, during early voting and possibly on election day, unaffiliated voters may vote if they first register with a major party. Voters already registered with a major party may update their registration but may not change their party.

In New Mexico 23% of the voters are independent or decline to state. Another 1% belong to a minor party. Those voters have not been allowed to participate in primary elections.

Following a study of open and closed primaries in 1993-95, LWVNM adopted a provision to support an “all-inclusive system of voting that allows all registered voters to participate in the primary election.”

So, the League wants all voters to be able to participate, but how? Meredith Machen has asked the state board to concur with part of the Maine League’s position on election procedure. The amended position statement is as follows, with the concurrence language underlined.

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports:

an all-inclusive system of voting that allows all registered voters to participate in the primary election,
so that

a) Voters who are not enrolled in a major political party may vote on one ballot per primary without having to enroll in that particular political party; and

(b) Voters enrolled in a major political party can vote only on the ballot of their party.”

League members are asked to consider the pros and cons of each of the two concurrence statements.

(a) Voters who are not enrolled in a major political party may vote on one ballot per primary without having to enroll in that particular political party.

PRO

- This will allow those who do not want to declare a party affiliation to participate in the selection of candidates they will be asked to choose among in the general election.
- Opening up primaries to unaffiliated voters will encourage broader participation by younger voters who are reported to be more likely not to want to be associated with a party.
- The number of voters who consider themselves independent is growing, a trend that will reduce participation in primaries if they are open only to voters who have declared a party. These independent voters are likely to decline to participate if they are required to affiliate with a party.
- Independent voters are taxpayers; they help pay for elections and should be able to vote without being forced to subscribe to a party.
- Closed primaries give the major parties a monopoly on power.
- Parties are more likely to consider electability as a factor in choosing a nominee when independents can cast their votes in a primary.

CON

- Parties should be able to choose their own candidates. Organizations typically allow only members to vote on organization business.
- If a voter wishes to participate in a party primary, s/he should be willing to affiliate with that party.
- An open primary dilutes the preferences of party members who are most dedicated to the principles of their party.

(b) Voters enrolled in a major political party can vote only on the ballot of their party.

PRO

- This restriction will prevent interference by opposing party voters who seek to select a weaker candidate for another party so as to benefit his/her party candidate.
- This provision preserves the party's freedom of association.

CON

- If unaffiliated voters are allowed to choose a party for each primary election, previously affiliated voters should also be able to choose which primary to participate in.
- Moderate members of one party should be allowed to vote for one of the candidates from the opposing party.

President's Corner

Continued from Page 1

Spanish. Janet Blair and her communications group are spreading the word through radio, TV, newspapers and social media, thanks to a generous grant from the Thornburg Foundation. Our redistricting work continues with the creation of the redistricting task force envisioned by a coalition, Fair Districts New Mexico, founded by the League. In spite of our new remote and socially distant lives, we carry on the work.

The board of LWVNM welcomes its newest member, Brittany Dutton-Leyda. With a father who is a native New Mexican and a mother whose family is

from El Salvador, Dutton-Leyda grew up speaking Spanish at home. She is currently a first-year student at UNM School of Law. Having been a paralegal in both the private and public sectors for the last 14 years, she feels that becoming an attorney will help her achieve the career she wants to fulfill her desire to help the community as a public servant. Dutton-Leyda is interested in practicing criminal law and civil rights law and potentially working for organizations such as The Innocence Project or the ACLU. She has been very active on the League's JEDI committee.



Advocacy Workshop – Prepare for the 2021 Legislative Session

This will be a virtual event – details to follow

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico Presents:

Effective Citizen Advocacy at the Legislature

Saturday, December 5, 2020 10 a.m. to Noon
The public is invited.

Learn tips from legislators and a professional citizen lobbyist on how to interact with legislators, speak at hearings, and advocate for your cause.

This workshop is about the legislative process, not specific issues.

Speakers:

Senator Nancy Rodriguez (D-Santa Fe)

Representative Rebecca Dow (R-Grant, Hidalgo & Sierra)

Jim Jackson, Former Chief Executive Officer of
Disability Rights New Mexico

Selecting Judges and Justices in New Mexico

By Barbara Calef

In New Mexico voters play an important role in selecting and retaining our judges; as with the other branches of government, it is important to listen to the candidates and review their records. Since 1988 New Mexico has had a hybrid system for the higher court judges. Prior to that year, they were elected, although the governor could make appointments to fill vacancies between elections.

In 1988 a constitutional amendment was passed establishing the NM Judicial Nominating Selection Commission to guide the governor in choosing appointees. There are actually 15 commissions, one for each court; they are comprised of judges, attorneys, and citizens and chaired by the Dean of the UNM School of Law. When a judicial vacancy occurs, the Commission meets to review applications and interview interested attorneys. Public participation is invited. Subsequently, the Commission presents a list of names for the governor's consideration in making the political appointment. Magistrate court vacancies are not subject to this process.

The appointed judge or justice must run in the next general election. Candidates may identify their political affiliation or chose to run as an independent. If they choose to register with a major party, they may have to run in a primary election as well. This offers them the opportunity to engage with voters and to receive support in their campaigns. They are restricted from expressing opinions about potential cases, but can still speak about their philosophy of justice and their views about the strengths and weaknesses of the judicial system in the state. To preserve the integrity of judicial candidates, they are required to set up an independent campaign committee to handle fundraising.

Judges are elected for a term of six years. Upon completion of a term, the judge or justice must seek voter approval in a non-partisan, retention election. Each retention candidate must receive at least 57% "Yes" votes to continue in office. Some voters may know the candidates through personal experience or reputation. This year they can also read the candidates' responses in the LWVNM voter guide, Vote411, or in the local League Voter Guides. In addition, voters may consult the NM Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission (JPEC) website: <https://www.nmjpec.org/en>. Armed with this information, voters can make intelligent decisions about whether to retain the sitting judges. So, when filling out your ballot, do not skip over their names!

The name of Supreme Court Justice Nakamura is on the ballot. However, she will be retiring on December 1. The New Mexico Supreme Court Judicial Nominating Commission will convene by Zoom beginning at 9 a.m. on Nov. 19. The meeting is open to the public, and anyone who wishes to speak about any of the candidates will have an opportunity to be heard. Here is the Zoom information:

**Topic: New Mexico Supreme Court Judicial
Nominating Commission Meeting
Time: Nov. 19 at 9 a.m.**

Join the Zoom meeting:

<https://unm.zoom.us/j/379615447?pwd=M3lSVGx-uSEkrSjd4cExlVXYwK3MzOT09>

Meeting ID: 379 615 447

Password: 72146

How Absentee Ballots Are Handled

By Barbara Calef



New Mexico law allows the processing of absentee ballots by the county clerk to begin five days before Election Day. (For the General Election, the process can begin 10 days before Election Day if more than 10,000 ballots have been requested.) I served on the absentee ballot board in Los Alamos County during the primary. We began working in the County warehouse at noon on Friday, May 29. Our first task was to recount the ballots we received from the county clerk and make sure they were in bundles of 25. We alphabetized them and then checked each one off on the roster, making sure the information on the outer envelope was complete and correct. If it was not, the ballot was given to the county clerk, who contacted the voter to ask for the missing information. We stopped work at 5 p.m. that day.

We returned to the warehouse at 8:30 a.m. on Monday and continued to check off the ballots, adding in the ballots received since Friday. When we had checked off all the ballots received, we opened the outer envelopes, using a machine to slit them, and removed the inner envelopes. The outer envelopes were re-banded in groups of 25 and put aside.

Next, we removed the ballots from the inner envelopes and opened them. We checked for any potential problems such as tearing or pencil markings. Problem ballots were set aside to be hand tallied. The ballots were counted and re-counted in batches of 25. On Election Day we began to work at 7:00 a.m., processing newly arrived ballots. By afternoon all the ballots that had been received so far had been removed from the envelopes, opened, and placed in batches. Next we fed them into the tabulators, still in batches. A technician from the tabulator company (Dominion) remained with us the entire time we were using the tabulators and gave advice as needed.

On Election Day we began to work at 7:00 a.m., processing newly arrived ballots. By afternoon all the ballots that had been received so far had been removed from the envelopes, opened, and placed in batches.

At each tabulator, one person fed in the ballots while the other operated the machine and watched the screen. When there was a problem, the screen indicated where in the stack it occurred. Most often the problem was caused by a turned-up edge on the ballot. When all the ballots had gone through the tabulators, two workers, both DTS (Decline to State) reviewed the ballots highlighted by the machines. Sometimes the voter overvoted, other times there was a stray mark. Looking at the ballot on the screen, it was often possible to determine the voter's intention and the machine would adjust the tally.

The scanned ballots from each tabulator were dumped in a ballot box. When we were finished, each box was labelled and locked. Meanwhile, the other absentee by mail workers performed the hand tallying of the ballots that could not be read by the tabulator as well as the federal ballots. Each time additional ballots were brought to the warehouse, the whole process was repeated until after 7 p.m. We were also required to sign papers attesting to the numbers of ballots of each type that had been processed. We finished work at 10:30 p.m. In all we processed 4,576 ballots.

Report of the Action Committee: THE NEW NORMAL

By Dick Mason, Action Chair

League Day during the 2021 session: In past years we would have already requested space for League Day, but this year we have been informed by Legislative Building Services that no decision on allowing in person attendance at the Legislature will be made until November. That means we should decide whether to proceed with planning a virtual League Day and then move to in person if they decide to open the session. The Action Committee will make a recommendation.

How we operate during the session: I believe that there will be limited opportunities for in person testimony at the Legislature. That means we will have to adapt our advocacy work to the new normal. We will discuss how to testify virtually at the Advocacy Workshop. (See separate announcement.) There have been glitches in the technology during the interim committee process. The advantage of virtual meetings is that we may be able to expand our lobbying group to include those who can't easily travel to Santa Fe.

Issues during the session: The focus will be on the budget shortfall, but that may offer opportunities to diversify our revenue sources. There is likely to be an effort to increase the distribution from the Land Grant Permanent Fund for education. I assume there will be legislation to decriminalize abortion. Also, we will be supporting legislation to reform our redistricting process. (See the separate update on redistricting.)

Action Committee Zoom meetings and the Action Listserve: We will be restarting our regular Zoom Action meetings. If you are interested in participating, you will have to sign up for the LWVNM Action Listserve. You can do that by going to: <https://www.lwvnm.org/Action/>

2021 Session Dates: This is a 60 day session, so all subjects can be considered.

January 4 - January 15 Legislation may be pre-filed (this is later than in previous years)

January 19 Opening day (noon)

February 18 Deadline for introduction of new legislation

March 20 Session ends (noon)

April 9 Legislation not acted upon by the Governor is pocket vetoed

June 18 Effective date of legislation not a general appropriation bill or a bill carrying an emergency clause or other specified date. Appropriation bills become effective July 1.

Fair Districts Report

By Dick Mason, Action Chair

The Thornburg Foundation has renewed our grant: \$40,000 for redistricting reform work and an additional \$7,500 for our voter education work.

Redistricting Task Force: New Mexico First is convening a Redistricting Task Force and the League will be represented by the LWVNM Fair Districts for New Mexico Project Leader Dick Mason. The task force will be co-chaired by two retired judges, one of whom is former Supreme Court Justice Edward Chavez, who oversaw the redrawing of the 2011 New Mexico House district maps after they were challenged in court. The other is former Court of Appeals Judge Roderick Kennedy. Eight legislators are participating, four Democrats and four Republicans. Common Cause and other "good government" groups will be included. The task force will have four representatives from the Native American community, including the Navajo Nation. There will also be representatives from the business community and academia.

The task force will start meeting on October 5th and will finish in early December. The plan is to have concrete recommendations, possibly including legislation, to improve the redistricting process in New Mexico.

The Centennial—Education, Advocacy, and Voter Engagement

By Meredith Machen, Special Projects Director

Millions of Americans have read articles and seen films, exhibits, photos, and documentaries about the suffrage centennial and been enlightened by documentaries, proclamations, performances, webinars, biographical sketches, and genealogical research. To what effect?

Beyond learning about the thousands of remarkable efforts to promote voting rights for women, we have increased awareness of the many discriminatory acts and systems that have excluded women and people of color from equal opportunity in America.

Our 100th anniversary and commemoration of the suffrage centennial have increased our capacity to work with organizations and individuals across the state and nation. In spite of the pandemic and in some ways because of it, we have been able collaborate virtually to educate the public on the preciousness of the vote and the valiant struggles for a truly representative and equitable democracy.

The League's mission and values and our ability to work for the public good through education and advocacy have never been stronger. We have grown immeasurably from fighting gender discrimination to fighting the corrosive effects of systemic racism and cultural, political, and economic oppression.

We have also contributed proclamations and articles to the NM State Archives and to the League of Women Voters archives in the Center for Southwest Research at UNM's Zimmerman Library. The public can view some of the collection online at <https://libguides.unm.edu/c.php?g=956352>

We have been interviewed numerous times on public television and public radio and had articles published in local, state, and national publications. We have also written pieces for and provided information to several newspapers about the centennial including the *Albuquerque Journal*, the *Las Cruces Sun Times*, the *Las Vegas Optic*, the *Los Alamos Daily Post*, the *Los Alamos Reporter*, the *Roswell Daily Record*, and the *Santa Fe New Mexican*.

LWVNM has been successful in getting two NM cities on the National Votes for Women Trail. Santa Fe features Nina Otero-Warren and Las Cruces features various important suffrage and women's rights leaders. A commemorative Pomeroy Foundation sign will soon be installed in Pioneer Women's Park in Las Cruces to honor women's suffrage and community efforts by the Women's Improvement Association. League members are working on two more applications for recognition of important sites in Albuquerque and Las Vegas.

Recent Features:

Some of the history we have uncovered is now collected in new Wikipedia entries.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage_in_New_Mexico

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_women%27s_suffrage_in_New_Mexico

The League was a major partner in NM's virtual celebration of 100 years of the women's vote. We had poetry, music, photos, history, and commentaries about women and by women, young and old, diverse and traditional, leaders and aspirers on Women's Equality Day, Wednesday, August 26. Freshly minted 18-year-old women voters from across NM joined women from across the country in testifying about why they are voting in the 2020 elections, showing the strength and power of the female voice. To see women from various cultures--Native American, Black, Hispanic, and Anglo—and hear from elected officials, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxjARBy6OqE>

The League participated in several webinars and podcasts exploring the history of the expansion of voting rights

for women and people of color in NM as a companion to PBS's American Experience: The Vote, which is available for streaming. NMPBS did four segments. The League is featured in Episode 2. <https://www.newmexico-pbs.org/new-mexico-and-the-vote-podcast/>

The League participated in two webinars about the women's vote with experts. <https://nmhumanities.org/women2020/>

For more history and resources, please contact Meredith Machen, Special Projects Director projects@lwwnm.org, 505 577-6337

Suffrage Car Parade



Santa Fe City Councilor Renee Villarreal and LWWNM Past President Meredith Machen

LWWNM coordinated a socially distanced, COVID-safe car parade in Santa Fe on August 23, following the route the suffragists took in 1915. <https://www.womensvote100.org/the-suff-buffs-blog/2020/6/24/suffrage-in-spanish-hispanic-women-and-the-fight-for-the-19th-amendment-in-new-mexico>.

Several officials participated in the parade, which went by the home of Nina Otero-Warren, now on the National Register of Historic Places in conjunction with NM and the 19th Amendment. <https://www.nps.gov/articles/new-mexico-and-the-19th-amendment.htm>

We were delighted that the Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation responded to our request that her house be renamed the Otero-Bergere House after we were successful in getting it approved and placed on the National Votes for Women Trail. The museum had to prepare an extensive justification, which was approved first by the Historic Santa Fe Foundation.

Sidebar

In 1922, Maud Wood Park, League of Women Voters president, wrote:

“The League's purpose is to develop women citizens into intelligent and self-directing voters and to turn their votes toward constructive social ends, to instill education in citizenship; to promote forums and public discussions of civic reforms and to support needed legislation.”

We dedicate our lives to that purpose every day!
Join us in making a difference!



Alfred M. Bergere House in Santa Fe

The Glorious, Notorious RBG

By Meredith Machen, Past President

In her Supreme Court opinion *U.S. v. Virginia*, 1996, Justice Ginsburg wrote, “Through a century plus three decades and more, women did not count among voters composing ‘We the People.’ Not until 1920 did women gain a constitutional right to the franchise. And for a half century thereafter, it remained the prevailing doctrine that government, both federal and state, could withhold from women opportunities accorded men so long as any ‘basis in reason’ could be conceived for the discrimination.”

Upon her death, LWVUS President Deborah Turner and CEO Virginia Kase wrote, “Justice Ginsburg’s wisdom, determination, and dedication to equal rights embodied the League’s belief in the power of women to create a more perfect democracy. She touched each and every one of our lives.”

Honor Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s tireless efforts to make the law reflect the ideals of equality. Democracy works when everyone can participate. Engage voters and non-voters today!

Spent Nuclear Fuel Storage Update

By Karen M. Douglas

The LWVNM Spent Nuclear Fuel (SNF) Storage Safety Committee reviewed the Draft HOLTEC Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to ensure that complete and accurate information was being considered by the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) prior to the decision whether to license the Consolidated Interim Storage Facility (CISF). Committee members, including Alex Burr/SNM, Bobbi Merryman/CNM, Karen Douglas/CNM, Kathy Economy/CNM, Karen Wentworth/CNM, Paul Karas/CNM, Laura Atkins/SFC, and Kurt Anderson/SNM, contributed reports that were consolidated into two sections, one with general remarks, and one addressing specific sections of the EIS. Bonnie Votaw/SNM, Jo Galvan Nash/SNM, Judy Williams/SFC, Barbara Calef/LA, and Karen Douglas/CNM edited the LWVNM Comments and prepared the correspondence signed by Hannah Burling for submission to the NRC in August 2020.

Committee members’ critique of the HOLTEC EIS noted inaccuracies in the site geology and hydrology with emphasis on effects of potential mining and related environmental impacts. Omissions of both the potential radiation exposure from nearby nuclear facilities and recent SNF storage problems and incidents at other locations nationwide were also detailed. Proximity to other New Mexico and Texas nuclear facilities was not fully evaluated in the draft EIS; the WIPP site is located 16 miles south-west of HOLTEC and stores transuranic waste. URENCO, the uranium enrichment facility, is located 38 miles south-east of the HOLTEC CISF site. The proposed TX/ISP CISF, under concurrent EIS review by the NRC, is located 40 miles south-east of the HOLTEC site and adjacent to the Waste Control Specialists low level radioactive waste disposal site in Andrews County TX.

The six NRC Public meetings for the HOLTEC EIS were all Webinars due to COVID Social Distancing. Meeting transcripts are now available on the NRC website (www.nrc.gov). The LWVNM SNF Advocacy Statement was entered into the record as testimony during the 6/23/20 meeting.

Following discussions with LWV/TX in August and September, the NM SNF Storage Safety Committee is independently reviewing the TX/ISP draft EIS, with comments due to the NRC on November 3. The ISP site is on the TX/NM Border 5 miles from Eunice, NM and 15 miles from Hobbs. Public meetings for the TX/ISP Draft EIS are also being conducted by Webinar only.

Local League News

Santa Fe County

By Judy Williams

The LWVSFC Voter Guide will be published in the New Mexican on Sunday, October 4, 2 days before early voting starts. We had an ad in the paper on September 18, and a flyer in a later version.

LWVSFC is working on voter registration and informing voters. We have distributed several thousand flyers to the Food Depot and other food banks. Our Help Line for voting has been helpful in attracting volunteers as well as providing information on voting.

We co-sponsored, with the Santa Fe World Affairs Forum, a series of three webinars on election issues. New Mexico Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver gave a talk titled “Election Security Issues in 2020 and How They are Being Addressed in New Mexico.” Sarah Hood, who teaches media literacy at Santa Fe Community College talked about “Fact vs. Fiction: How to Wade Through the (Insanity).” Finally, Lonna Rae Atkeson, Professor and Regents Lecturer in Political Science at the University of New Mexico discussed “Election Security, Fraud and Voter Confidence.”

The League is working with the city of Santa Fe on a good governance project. Its formulation has been delayed by budget and other issues, but we continue to communicate with the city council and staff about how the League can help.

LWVSFC now has more than 170 members.

Los Alamos

by Barbara Calef

Recent Lunch with a Leader programs in Los Alamos included a presentation on famous women in history, both real and mythological, by State Historian Robert Martinez, who also sang some of the stanzas from La Votacion Corrido, the Ballad of the Vote. Also, three members of the Alliance for Local Economic Prosperity (AFLEP.org) spoke about the benefits of a public bank for the state and announced that a bill to create a public bank will be filed during the 2021 legislative session. Most recently CNM League member Bobbi Merryman, a graduate student in nuclear engineering at UNM, presented a fascinating report on the safety of spent nuclear fuel storage.

When one of the members of the Los Alamos Public School Board announced she was moving, the Board asked the League to hold a candidate forum for the applicants to fill the vacancy. The virtual forum was well-attended and proceeded smoothly. The LAPS Board made their decision during a meeting three days later when they also had to decide how to proceed with



Hedy Dunn and Addie Jackson at the White Rock. Photo by Becky Shankland.

classes for district students.

Since parades and gatherings are now taboo, our 2020 latest centennial commemoration occurred at the famous (to locals) large, isolated boulder in the community of White Rock. Called “the white rock,” the boulder is a public greeting card on which residents paint celebratory messages for birthdays, anniversaries, etc. League members painted the rock on August 25 to proclaim our anniversary and remind people to vote. When they had finished, some of them posed in their suffragist garb while others were photographed in their painting outfits. Before the centennial was over, the proclamation had been painted over, so we repeated the effort the following day. Our planned library gallery exhibit has, of course, been put on hold. However, League member JJ Mortensen published two articles based on the contents in the Los Alamos Reporter: <https://losalamosreporter.com/2020/08/18/national-womens-suffrage-month-womens-long-battle-for-the-vote/> and <https://losalamosreporter.com/2020/08/26/league-of-women-voters-celebrates-100-years-of-accomplishments/>.

Our League produced a flyer with voter and census information that was handed out to the clients of LA Cares, an organization that provides boxes of food to needy residents once a month. Copies of the flyer were also handed out to residents of the assisted living facility in town.

We are delighted that in this busy election time, new folks are deciding to join the League: we have six new members for a total of 99 current members.

Central New Mexico

By Karen M. Douglas, Co-President

Voter Registration activity has been greatly hampered by concern about exposure to the coronavirus, and younger volunteers with no underlying health conditions are needed to staff the polling places during early voting and on election day. Linda Adcox-Kimmel, the new LWVCNM Office Manager, has implemented COVID-safe office procedures for opening the office September 14, 2020 in preparation for the general election. Routine calls from the public regarding absentee ballots and candidate information have been supplemented by calls concerning USPS reliability and COVID safety during early and election day voting at polling places.

CNM moved to a better office on July 1; however, the move was followed by a break-in and theft, requiring new measures to improve safety and security and incurring additional expense.

Incoming 3rd Vice President/Program Jennifer Black led the CNM calendar planning meeting on August 29. Potential speakers were identified to discuss desired LWV program topics for the monthly unit meetings through September 2021. Speaker availability always results in subsequent revisions to the schedule.

The August 13 Unit meeting featured Meredith Machen, LWVNM Director of Immigration, Education, and Special Projects, and Jeanne Logsdon, Regents Professor Emeritus from the UNM Anderson School of Business. They provided a history and perspective of the NM and national suffrage movement with highlights of suffragist contributions to education and social equity. Attendance increased for the September 10 CNM Zoom Unit meeting, with 25 participants viewing the discussion of voter registration & election administration provided by Bernalillo Deputy County Clerk Jaime Diaz, who responded to questions regarding the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on voter participation.

LWV Observer Corps Training is scheduled September 21 for volunteers from the four NM local Leagues. The Observer Corps Fundamentals training offered by LWVCA representatives Jenn Wong and Jennifer Waggoner during the recent LWVUS Convention will be supplemented by discussions of the Open Meetings Act by Mary Henrie Smith, JD, and lessons learned by Kathy Brook, SNM Co-President. LWV Observer buttons were distributed during August and observer guidance, checklist, and recommended report forms provided by LWVCA were revised by the four local League coordinators and will be distributed to volunteers.

The LWVCNM Annual Meeting scheduled for May was postponed with hope of an in-person event during the fall. However, COVID social distancing precautions remain in effect. The Annual Meeting will be held on October 3 via Zoom and will feature a JEDI guest speaker. As in prior years, efforts are underway to call members to encourage attendance.

APD Forward September meetings included discussion of APD Chief Geier's retirement. The six Community Policing Councils were realigned from APD management to the Civilian Police Oversight Agency, the body appointed by the City Council to recommend the level of police officer discipline in excessive Use of Force cases. Resumption of public status hearings before Judge Browning, was a welcome announcement following quarterly independent monitor reports. APD Forward coalition representatives met with the city Accountability and Oversight Division, APD Deputy Chief Garcia, APD Internal Affairs Commander Middleton, DOJ/Deputy US Attorney Elizabeth Martinez, and statisticians from the Compliance Bureau September 4th to discuss the systemic weakness in application of police discipline noted in the 11th Independent Monitor's report released earlier this year.

Southern New Mexico

By Kathy Brook and Eileen VanWie, Co-presidents

With the current constraints on celebrating the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment, LWVSNM member Jo Galván Nash designed a yard sign commemorating Votes for Women as well as urging early voting in the general election. In recent weeks, 100 signs have been distributed around the Las Cruces area. They are festive, featuring suffrage colors, and they have drawn the attention of friends and neighbors so that that we wish we had printed more. We also noted the centennial celebration with an op-ed in our local papers.



Plans are underway to print both English and Spanish versions of the voter guide, with the English version appearing in the weekly *Las Cruces Bulletin* and the Spanish version in a publication called *Camino Real*. The Spanish version will be available in significantly larger numbers than for previous elections. To support the printed voter guide, we submitted a proposal for partial funding to El Paso Electric; their response is pending. Additional activities related to the general election include providing election information in utility bills and with meal deliveries for those who are homebound, contacting neighborhood associations, and working with students at NMSU, Doña Ana Community College, and local high schools

Vote early! Photo by Eileen VanWie

Our JEDI committee has been actively engaged in drafting a strategic plan focusing on the actions needed to prevent and reduce poverty as an avenue to achieving goals in the areas of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. This includes identifying existing League positions at the national, state, and local levels that align with reductions in poverty. It also includes strategies to recruit diverse members to our League.

Our August general meeting featured Lisa LaRocque, the sustainability officer for the City of Las Cruces, speaking on plans for Las Cruces's energy transition. On September 12 Karen Trujillo, Superintendent of Las Cruces Public Schools, joined our general meeting to discuss issues relating to the Yazzie-Martinez case and the challenges of addressing student learning in the COVID-19 era. In particular, she described the district's efforts to provide internet access and electronic devices to families that lacked them, interactions with child supervision providers so that they could assist students in logging into their school work, and the mandate for changing air filtration systems prior to reopening the schools. She also described ways in which some high school students are tutoring younger students in the district; the challenges of balancing the work loads of students using online delivery; and wellness checks on students.



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Please consider helping your local League or LWVNM to pay for our voter guides and candidate forums. You can send a tax-deductible gift by check to your local League or to LWVNM. See www.lwvnm.org for more information and links to our local Leagues. Thank you for making democracy work!

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that helps the public play an informed and active role in government. At the local, state, regional and national levels, the League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Anyone 16 years of age or older, male or female, may become a member. The League of Women Voters never endorses candidates for office or supports political parties.