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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



As I write this, the world's first crowdfunded war is ongoing. Due to the internet and the globalization of commerce, people on the far side of the world can directly affect the course of a war on their computers, without leaving the house. Astonishing times for digital activism lie ahead.

There were significant successes in the 2022 legislative session, especially in education, but the great disappointment was the last minute failure of SB144, the combined election bill. As in so many other states, attacks on voting rights are spiking. Our Action Committee co-chair, Dick Mason, will have much more to say about the legislative session.

Virginia Kase, the CEO of LWVUS, recently hosted a live event which streamed on FaceBook. She spoke with women in leadership positions at Supermajority, Black Voters Matter and LULAC, all of whom have a great deal of experience in political action. They were all enormously hopeful, not in spite of, but because of the kind of voter suppression that we see taking place across the country. The consensus was that "it's because we're winning." Take heart.

LWVNM will be introducing OutReach Circle by April 15th. This is an app for cell phones and other devices which, should you choose to sign up, makes it quick and easy to engage in political action and to keep up with League activities and pertinent news. It comes to us free from LWVUS. You do NOT have to be a technology expert to use it. More will be revealed!

The biennial national convention of the League will be held in Denver June 23rd through June 26th and online. If you can possibly go, I urge you to do so. It is a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the League and to acquire the skills it takes to achieve our mission. Spending several days with hundreds of League members is so uplifting and energizing and I think we can all use some more uplift and energy.

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Call to Council

April 30, 2022

6739 Academy Rd. NE, Suite 124

Albuquerque

In even years the state League holds a council meeting. In odd years we hold a convention. This year, the meeting will be hosted by Central New Mexico. Each local League is allowed two delegates – the president or alternate plus one additional member. Also serving as delegates will be all LWVNM board members, including officers and on-board directors, plus one delegate representing the members at large. All other League members are invited to attend as observers. Registration for the meeting will be from 11:30 to 11:45 a.m., followed by lunch and the speaker at noon. Registration, which includes lunch, is \$30.00.

Please send in the registration form in this newsletter with your check by April 20. Please see page 3 for the registration form and agenda information.

The guest speaker will be Heather Balas. The topic will be national voting and election issues.

Heather W. Balas has over 25 years of experience in public policy, including policy research, citizen deliberation, legislative advocacy, voter education and coalition-building. She is the Vice President of the Election Reformers Network and also a senior consultant to the nonpartisan Issue One and the Carter Center. For twelve years she was the President and Executive Director of New Mexico First. Previous employers include the Thornburg Foundation, Kaiser Family Foundation, the Commission on Presidential Debates, and the California Center for Civic Participation. She holds a master's degree in political communication from the University of Maryland and a bachelor's degree in journalism.

League of Women Voters Council Agenda April 30, 2022

- 11:30 a.m. Registration
- 11:45 Call to order
- 12:00 Luncheon with Heather Balas
- 1:00- 2:30 p.m. LWVNM Council
- President's Report
- Membership Report
- Treasurer's Report and Budget Program
- Judicial Selection Study
- Tribal Law Study
- Committee Reports: Action, Spent Nuclear Fuel Advocacy Group, JEDI Voter Guide, Election Calendar, and Candidate Forums
- Local League Reports --- Sharing of Programs, Studies, Activities
- Directions to the Board
- Adjourn Council
- 2:35-3:30 LWVNM Board Meeting

----- Registration Form-----

Please mail form and a check for \$30 by April 20 payable to
LWVCNM
6739 Academy Blvd NE Ste #124 Albuquerque, NM 87109

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

- I will attend as (Please check one)*
- Local League delegate from LWV _____
 - Member at Large delegate*
 - LWVNM Board Member*
 - Non-delegate member/observer/guest (circle one)

The registration fee includes materials and lunch. Please indicate your choice of:
 Roasted Veggie Salad (vegan) _____ or California Cobb (with meat) _____

*LWVNM Board members who are not local League presidents or delegates, and the Member at Large delegate should NOT send a check with their registration. Instead, please contact LWVNM Treasurer, Suzanne Ronneau at 505-699-7781 or sronneau@bellsouth.net. She will pay the registration fee.

Address for Council: 6739 Academy Blvd (east of San Mateo, west of Wyoming) in Academy Office Park - contact 505-263-3297

Despite Setbacks on Key Issues, the 2022 Legislative Session was a Success

By Dick Mason, Action Chair

It was disappointing that SB 144, the comprehensive voting and elections reform bill, was blocked by a legislative maneuver in the Senate on the last day of the session (see separate article). Despite that setback, the session was a success from the League viewpoint.

In the area of the budget and taxes: Due to federal funding and increased revenue from oil & gas the FY2022 budget was 14% greater than the previous year. This allowed for much needed increased salaries for educators and state workers. Unfortunately, this being an election year, the excess revenue also led to a series of recurring tax cuts that will result in an annual loss of revenue averaging \$400 million. Only one of these tax cuts contributes to the progressivity of the tax system. We have been here before – cutting taxes during good times leading to loss of revenue and then cutting programs during bad times. There were also some tax credits that have proven to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

Please see separate articles on redistricting and natural resources.

Other important legislation that was passed and signed by the Governor:

SB 1 authorized substantial salary increases for educators.

SB 140 provided substantial funding for post-secondary education.

Three pieces of legislation address past injustices to Native Americans.

The cap on predatory loans was reduced from 175% to 36%.

The New Mexico Housing Trust Fund established a steady source of income to support the creation of affordable housing.

Although the memorial on modernizing the legislature did not pass, there is \$100,000 in the budget for UNM to convene a task force.

Changes in the Action Committee: The LWVNM Board approved the following changes to the Action Committee: Creation of an Action Steering Committee that will develop action logistics and training. (The actual discussion and selection of legislation to support or oppose will still rest with the broader Action Committee.) Appointment of three equal co-Chairs of the Action Committee: Akkana Peck, Hannah Burling, and Dick Mason. They will also form the core of the Action Steering Committee.

Building Towards a Truly Independent Redistricting Commission

By Dick Mason

On February 9, 2022, HJR 9 Constitutional Amendment for an Independent Redistricting Commission passed in the House Government, Elections and Indian Affairs Committee on a 5-4 vote. We want to thank Chairwoman Georgene Louis and Representatives Daymon Ely, Doreen Gallegos, Wonda Johnson, and Kristina Ortez for voting in support of fair and transparent redistricting.

Given the lateness in the session and the heavy load of legislation remaining, we did not expect HJR 9 to receive its next hearing, which would have been House Judiciary. Our goals in this session were to get HJR 9 passed by at least one committee and to get feedback on what legislators liked and did not like in the resolution. With your help we accomplished those goals.

We want to thank our dedicated sponsor, Representative Natalie Figueroa, for working so diligently to get the bill

drafted and introduced with Representative Ely's help, and for her skillful presentation to the committee. Representative Figueroa has let us know she is with us going into the 2023 session.

Judge Roderick Kennedy, Jeremy Farris of the New Mexico State Ethics Commission and Heather Balas of the Election Reformers Network provided expert testimony at the committee hearing. I want to express the League's deepest gratitude to Justice Edward Chavez, who helped bring us here with his dedication to the New Mexico First Redistricting Task Force and the Citizen Redistricting Committee. He also helped draft the original language of HJR 9.

On February 22nd the Board of the Thornburg Foundation approved a \$50,000 grant for the League. Thirty-five thousand of that was to continue our Fair Districts for New Mexico campaign. The grant started on March 1, 2022. Our consultant, Kathleen Burke, has agreed to continue on the effort to build public and legislative support for an independent redistricting commission.

The League will be working with New Mexico First as they reconvene the Redistricting Task Force that was key to developing the principles that resulted in the passage of the 2021 Redistricting Act.

The issue of county and municipal redistricting has arisen because of lawsuits in Sandoval and San Juan Counties. Senator Brenda McKenna introduced legislation during the recent session to study county redistricting. It did not pass, but Senator McKenna will be introducing the bill again in the 2023 session. Unlike state redistricting, county and municipal redistricting is not limited by the New Mexico Constitution or by statute.

New Mexico Needs an Independent Redistricting Commission

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico led the Fair Districts for New Mexico (FDNM) project that helped pass the 2021 Redistricting Act. That act created the Citizen Redistricting Committee (CRC) that was charged with gathering public input and making recommendations to the Legislature for district maps for Congress, New Mexico Senate, New Mexico House and the Public Education Commission.

The CRC did an admirable job in a very compact period of time and the seven members of the CRC deserve the appreciation of all New Mexicans. But in the above paragraph, the key word is "recommendations." In the end the Redistricting Act left the final decision with the Legislature.

That means that the legislators get to choose their constituents rather than constituents choosing their legislators. In what universe is that not a conflict of interest? We saw that manifested in the way the New Mexico Senate largely ignored the recommendations of the CRC and developed the districts maps behind closed doors

That is why the League of Women Voters of New Mexico urges New Mexicans to support the House Joint Resolution that will be introduced by Representative Natalie Figueroa. If passed, that resolution will put the question of creation of a true independent redistricting commission on the 2022 ballot. Numerous polls over the years have shown that an overwhelming number of New Mexicans prefer an independent redistricting commission. The New Mexico Legislature owes it to the voters of New Mexico to allow them to make that choice

By Dick Mason

Legislature Passes Few Natural Resources Bills

By Barbara Calef and Judy Williams

The Natural Resources Committee more than doubled in size this year with participation by Jeanne Logsdon, Lora Lucero, and Kathleen Burke. Many natural resources bills were filed for the short session. We followed 17 of them, but very few passed.

Successes:

- HB 37, the Community Energy Efficiency Development Block Grant, creates a grant program to implement energy efficiency measures in low-income households.
- HB 164, Uranium Mine Clean-up requires the New Mexico Environment Department to coordinate a statewide effort to clean up and reclaim legacy uranium mine and mill sites.
- Two other bills we supported, HB 34, the Solar Market Development Tax Credit Extension and HB 125, Sustainable Building Tax Credits Dates, were folded into HB 163 Tax Changes.

Disappointments:

- The biggest disappointment was the failure of HB 6, The Clean Future Act, which would have codified the Governor's goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 50% of the 2005 level by 2030 and 90% by 2050. It was amended (and improved) as it proceeded through two House committees, but never received a vote on the House floor.

- SB 14, the Clean Fuel Standard, designed to reduce the state's carbon footprint by going after greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector, passed the Senate but died in a tie vote of 33-33 in the House. A stated reason was that it could raise gas prices.

Other bills we supported included:

- HB 101, NM Reforestation Center, would create a center to address the impacts of the changing climate on the state's forests and meet the state's current and future reforestation needs through establishment of a seed bank program, a nursery program and a planting program.

- SB 21, Electric Vehicle Income Tax Credit, would encourage the purchase of an electric vehicle or EV charging unit; but also added a registration fee for electric vehicles.

We opposed the hydrogen hub and related bills:

The League opposed all efforts during the legislative session to enact legislation to create a hydrogen hub, grant extensive tax breaks to oil and gas companies, allocate funds to the defunct Escalante power plant to convert it into a hydrogen hub, and to create public-private partnerships for the purpose of advancing blue hydrogen in New Mexico.

- HB 4, Hydrogen Hub, would have used methane to produce "blue" hydrogen, which would have increased CO2 emissions, and would grant many tax credits and deductions to natural gas producers and related companies.

- HB 194 would have amended the Renewable Energy and Energy Transition Acts to define hydrogen produced with methane as a clean source of energy.

- HB 227 was a "dummy bill" introduced toward the end of the session. It was the same as HB 4 minus the tax breaks.

- HB 228, another "dummy" bill, was essentially the same as HB 227.

Procedural Obstacles Block Important Voting and Election Reforms

By Dick Mason

Not a single voting bill on the League priority list survived despite unprecedented support from several coalitions with 30-40 supporting groups. There were three important voting & elections bills:

SB 6: Election Security & Administration

SB 8: New Mexico Voting Rights Act

SB 144: Intimidation of Election Workers

SB 6 passed the Senate with bipartisan support.

SB 8 was blocked in the Senate by a procedural tactic on the Senate floor that prevented a vote.

SB144 passed the Senate with bipartisan support.

SB 6 and SB 8, and ultimately SB 144 contained virtually everything the League could wish for to make voting more accessible and secure.

Because SB 8 was blocked in the Senate, the House Judiciary Committee chose to merge sections of SB 6 and SB 8 into SB 144. The amended bill passed the House with some bipartisan support on the morning of the last day of the session. When it went over to the Senate for concurrence, a vote was blocked by a two-hour filibuster. The session ended at noon.

Would it have been better to allow SB 6 and SB144 to proceed on their own since both had bipartisan support? That is the question.

The League, along with others, has to look into ways to reform the legislative process to modify procedural tactics that block votes on legislation.

In addition to the three voting bills mentioned above, there were proposed constitutional amendments that would have allowed Declined to State (DTS) voters to vote in party primaries. They did not have much support.

Ranked Choice Voting

By Kathy Brook, Program Director

The subject of ranked choice voting (RCV) emerged again at the most recent LWVNM board meeting. As some may recall, about three years ago the state board concurred with the Vermont League's position in support of RCV. However, discussion among delegates attending the 2019 LWVNM Convention led to deletion of the position. At the time, many members felt that they did not know enough about RCV. In the meantime, RCV has been adopted by a number of municipalities and other jurisdictions. Both Las Cruces and the City of Santa Fe have run municipal elections using RCV and New York City used this method in its most recent election. Maine will be using RCV for presidential primaries starting in 2024 and the Alaska Supreme Court recently upheld a decision by the voters in Alaska to implement RCV in general elections (along with a nonpartisan primary system which includes state and federal office holders).

To increase member knowledge of RCV, the state board has decided to host a forum on the topic at a date yet to be determined. This article provides an overview of the topic.

Ranked choice voting, also known as instant run-off voting, allows a voter facing a ballot with more than two candidates for a position to indicate a favorite candidate, followed by a second choice, and so on by ranking the candidates from first to last preference. Then, when the votes are tabulated, if the first-choice votes do not identify a candidate preferred by the majority of voters, the candidate with the least votes is dropped from consideration. The votes received by that least preferred candidate then go to the second-choice candidates of those voters and

the votes are retabulated. The process continues until a candidate does receive the majority of votes.

This method of voting is appealing to voters who prefer that the winning candidate be required to earn a majority of votes but wish to avoid the expense associated with run-off elections. It may also be supported by those who feel that they are throwing away their vote if they vote for a true favorite who is unlikely to win in a standard election. RCV allows them to vote for their favorite candidate and possibly to have an impact on the outcome through their second or later ranked candidates. Because of this factor, RCV may make running for office attractive to a wider range of candidates. Yet another rationale is that voter turn-out is often lower for a run-off election than for the election preceding it. Since RCV allows the run-off to occur instantly, without voters having to vote again at a later date, participation in the “run-off” may be enhanced. Finally, there is some evidence supporting the argument that candidates who are aware that they can benefit from being the second or third choice of voters are less likely to engage in negative campaigns.

On the downside, RCV requires more effort on the part of voters if they are to rank their less favored candidates. In the standard process, a second choice is only necessary if no candidate wins a majority of the votes and a runoff is required by law. Implementation of RCV also requires time and effort on the part of election officials and organizations such as the League to educate voters about how the system works. Another area of concern is confidence in the outcomes of the tabulation. Those candidates who lose in an RCV election, and their voters, may be less likely to accept the results because of unfamiliarity with the new system.

The Center for Civic Design has endorsed a list of best practices for conducting a ranked choice voting election. These include showing how the counting process works, describing what happens in each round of counting, and showing all rounds in counting so that voters can easily see the number of votes moved to each candidate.

NM Takes Huge Steps to Address Workforce Shortages: More Needed

Meredith Machen, Education Co-Chair

The expansion of the Opportunity Scholarships program is a wise strategic investment that will benefit individuals, families, communities, and businesses for as long as the state can afford it. The governor prioritized “free college” as an economic driver in her proposed budget for the fiscal year that starts in July, and SB140, sponsored by Sen. Liz Stefanics and Rep. Joy Garratt, passed handily thanks in large part to federal rescue funds. The budget for these scholarships includes \$12 million from the state and \$63 million from non-recurring federal revenues.

The program will help NM deal with critical worker shortages in education, health care, technology, and other high-need careers. Starting with the fall semester, NM residents without undergraduate degrees will not pay tuition or fees at any of NM’s public or tribal post-secondary institutions if they meet enrollment and academic requirements. Individuals must have resided in the state for a year. There are no income or citizenship eligibility requirements, and incarcerated individuals can also enroll. The program covers students wishing to pursue a credit-bearing certificate, an associate degree (up to 90 credits), or a bachelor’s degree (up to 160 credits). A student must complete at least six credits a semester (fall and spring) with a 2.5 GPA. Recipients can also use the scholarship for summer semesters. More information is available at <https://hed.state.nm.us/free-college-for-new-mexico>.

Starting with the fall semester, NM residents without undergraduate degrees will not pay tuition or fees at any of NM’s public or tribal post-secondary institutions if they meet enrollment and academic requirements.

About 35,000 New Mexicans are expected to use these scholarships this year, saving them from the burden of student loan debts. Many low-income individuals, especially women and people of color, have been unable to af-

ford college or complete degrees. The scholarships will improve access to higher paying careers, and New Mexico will see a more educated workforce filling jobs in business and government. Our economy and quality of life will benefit from increased tax revenues and fewer people living in poverty.

Immigration Update

By Meredith Machen, Immigration Chair

LWVUS continues to advocate for federal legislation that provides a pathway to citizenship for DACA recipients, farmworkers, and essential workers. Last spring, H.R. 6 – American Dream and Promise Act of 2021- <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/6/text> - passed the House (228-197). H.R. 1603 – Farm Workforce Modernization Act of 2021-<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1603>- passed the House (247-174). Neither has passed the Senate nor has S.747- Citizenship for Essential Workers Act <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/747/text>.

Immigration reform is long overdue and hampering American progress on many fronts.

For a glimpse, see <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/2021-survey-of-daca-recipients-underscores-the-importance-of-a-pathway-to-citizenship/>

LWVNM Spent Nuclear Fuel Storage Safety

By Karen Douglas

The Spent Nuclear Fuel (SNF) Storage Safety Committee had two major commitments for March:

- Response to the Federal Register Notice proposing a federally managed Consolidated Interim Storage Facility (CISF); and
- Presentation to the March 8th LWVIL Issues Convention for concurrence with the NM SNF Storage Safety Position.

The response to the US Department of Energy Federal Register Notice, issued in December 2021, offered an opportunity for input into potential federal management of a CISF. Members participating in the February 22 meeting formulated responses to 16 questions from 3 areas:

- Area 1: Consent-Based Siting Process;
- Area 2: Removing Barriers to Meaningful Participation; and
- Area 3: Interim Storage as Part of a Waste Management System.

LWVNM submitted the responses with a cover letter signed by President Hannah Burling on March 3, 2022.

Bobbi Merryman and Karen Douglas presented the LWVNM SNF Storage Safety Position to the LWVIL Issues Convention on March 8 for proposed IL concurrence. Negotiations regarding the presentation detail and handouts were completed and the final presentation submitted to LWVIL prior to the March 4 dry run of the presentation with IL Issues contacts Laura Davis and William Koehl.

The presentation was followed by a talk by Doug Ower from the Illinois Sierra Club. Ower, a member of the Zion, IL Decommissioning Citizens Advisory Panel, discussed progress and shortfalls in the planning and conduct of Zion Nuclear Power Plant decommissioning. Agenda for the 2022 LWVIL Issues Briefing included two sessions daily between March 8 and 11, offering LWVIL members an education on current issues to better address the challenges facing our nation. The LWVNM presentation was well received and the recording with Power Point slides and handouts will be posted on the LWVIL website by March 15.

“We the People”* Statewide ZOOM Conversation On Democracy and Elections, May 22, 2022, 2-3:30pm

What do we value in democracy? Where do you want our country to be in five or ten years? How do we develop understanding for varying perspectives in our diverse country? Does government do enough to advance equity and address poverty? How much can it and should it do?

What about voter participation and confidence in our elections? Many people believe that true representation requires voting to be fair and accessible. Some want restrictions, claiming rampant voter fraud. What are the statistics? How secure are our elections? How secret/private are our ballots? How do we sort through campaign promises to choose the best candidates to represent us? How can non-voters participate?

How can the media help us understand the complexities of our changing society? How might they highlight efforts of our governmental representatives to build consensus and find common ground?

What can we do to broaden understanding with people who think differently from us? Let’s listen and talk to one another and learn more.



LEADERS

Dr. Lonna Atkeson, UNM Political Science Professor Emerita, Director of the Center for the Study of Voting, Elections and Democracy. Dr. Atkeson’s extensive publications focus on election science, voting rights, public opinion, political psychology, and political behavior nationally and in New Mexico. She has researched virtually every aspect of NM’s elections and voter participation.

Cindy Nava is the Executive Director of Transform Education NM. Ms. Nava is a public policy advocate and educator dedicated to empowering youth through leadership development. She brings an immigrant lens to her lifelong commitment to advance equity and opportunity. After residing in NM for 26 years, she became a US citizen in 2021 and voted for the first time.

Dr. Christa Slaton is NMSU Professor of Government Emerita and Dean of the College of Liberal Arts. Dr. Slaton is an experienced mediator, arbitrator, facilitator, and author. She uses communications technology, including electronic town meetings, to promote understanding of complex policy issues and trust in democracy.

Megan Kamerick, **Moderator, requested.**

Bethany Tabor coordinates programs for the NM Humanities Council including the NM Listens project. She promotes community engagement through a multi-disciplinary approach to public programming including performance art. **Organizer:** bethany@nmhum.org.

PARTICIPANTS

Community members will have the opportunity to talk with students from universities and high schools around the state who participate in ENLACE, a statewide collaborative that represents people who have not traditionally had a say in policy initiatives that affect their families and communities.

We'll hear from the experts and use Zoom's breakout rooms for small group discussion.

Registration link will be up in April at <https://nmhumanities.org/NMHC.php?area=eventsmapcal&tab=list#>

* **“We, the people, in order to create a more perfect union....”** U. S. Constitution, 1787.

We are the People. Our elected officials vow to respect the Constitution, which protects the basic rights of all Americans.

For more information, contact
Meredith Machen
League of Women Voters of New Mexico
505-577-6337 c
projects@lwvnm.org

Empowering Voters - Defending Democracy

Local League News

Santa Fe County

By Jody Larson

LWVSFC is gearing up for Annual Meeting and LWVNM Council. We are also starting to plan our delegation to the LWVUS convention, to be held in Denver this year.

Our Program Planning meeting on February 9 included a thorough review of LWVUS and LWVSFC positions, with specific recommendations for the LWVUS Campaign To Make Democracy Work, including that LWVUS policy and its implementation be followed as closely as resources allow. We have not received any proposals for new studies, but are following several local issues that might show a need for updated positions. We also discussed topics for possible speakers, which included water issues, local impacts of immigration policy, and affordable housing and homelessness.

On February 23 we enjoyed a webinar presentation by Juliana Tejinder of Reunity Resources, a local nonprofit that began in 2011 by collecting used cooking oil to recycle into biofuel, and now includes both doorstep and commercial compost collection, a farm that uses the compost, a community fridge, partnerships with Youthworks, Many Mothers and many other community organizations, and events every weekend during the growing season. Their working relationships with local governments are very interesting.

We continue to follow developments in the city's Midtown Campus project and the Culture, History, Arts, Reconciliation and Truth initiative that resulted from the incident on the plaza during which the obelisk was torn down. We are also trying to get information about an update to the city's Growth Management Plan about which transparency has been less than optimal.

Our VOTER is now a snazzy Constant Contact communication that does not require downloading the entire document. Each subject is presented in a very appealing way, with the reader able to select and read it separately. We are promoting events in the curated online Santa Fe Bulletin Board, which has over 40,000 viewers. Our Communications Director has met with the new advertising director of the Santa Fe New Mexican, and she is also conferring with our Voter Services team to plan strategies for the upcoming primary and general elections.

Other preparation for upcoming elections includes planning for help line, tabling, materials development and distribution, collaborations, volunteers, posters, and relations with local media. The NAACP is asking local branches to coordinate with other entities, including local Leagues, and LWVSFC will be part of this effort. Our Youth Advocacy Program is progressing, as well, with a draft manual in progress. Our intern is also completing a mini manual for student election work based on what was accomplished for local elections last November. Recently, Judy Williams and Hannah Burling helped La Coalición de Taos with a candidate forum, including materials, grid, and moderator training, which may result in new League members. We are continuing to work with Outreach Circle and are considering resuming League Libations.

Our NM Listens team has held its second event, “Santa Fe Stories You’ve Never Heard,” with 48 registrations and about 30 attendees. The third event, “Old Roots/New Roots,” was held in Edgewood, and we are looking at partnering with Little Globe on an event at Southside Public Library. Another Edgewood event, “Edgewood Future Visions,” was scheduled for March 19. Other local outreach continues.

Central New Mexico

By Karen Douglas

Preparation for the March 2022 Sandoval County election included distribution of Vote411 flyers to selected sites by Jennifer Black, 3rd VP, and Starlyn Brown, Office Manager and Webmaster, to notify residents about this valuable source of election information. LWVCNM also hosted two candidate forums for the Village of Corrales. The February 9 federal hearing for the Court Approved Settlement Agreement (CASA, aka Consent Decree) between the US Department of Justice (DOJ) and CABQ (City of Albuquerque) regarding police officer excessive use of force was a continuation of the 8-hour January 15 federal hearing. The continuation offered the three AMICI Groups (McClendon Subclass, APD Forward, and the Community Coalition) an opportunity to voice their concerns regarding CABQ progress toward satisfying the DOJ stipulated order, which noted Albuquerque Police Department (APD) training deficiencies and continuing noncompliance of APD Internal Affairs disciplinary actions.

The League will observe Sunshine Week by hosting the Executive Director of the Foundation for Open Government at the March 10 Luncheon Meeting. LWVCNM is tentatively planning an in-person Annual Meeting on Saturday, May 14 at the Sheraton Hotel during which Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller will address the members. A hard copy of the April Voter will be mailed to all members and include reports required for member information and Annual Meeting decisions.

Southern New Mexico

By Kathy Brook and Eileen VanWie, Co-Presidents

Celebratory Events A number of League members joined other members of the community at a virtual breakfast sponsored by the Dona Aña County NAACP in celebration of MLK Day. Lt. Governor Howie Morales was the speaker. In recognition of the League’s birthday in February we awarded the second annual Making Democracy Work Award to Mary Carter, who teaches citizenship classes in English and Spanish at the Women’s Intercultural Center in Anthony, New Mexico.

JEDI After a discussion of diversity at the November general meeting, board members committed to reading and discussing An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. The discussion occurred in January and the board subsequently adopted a land acknowledgement statement to use at League meetings and on League publications. The statement references the Piro, Manso, and Tewa pueblos (associated with the Tortugas community adjacent to Las Cruces), as well as Mescalero and Chiricahua Apaches. We need to continue to learn about and take action to be strong allies of Indigenous Peoples.

Program Our general meeting in January featured a panel to discuss the issues in the proposed criminal justice concurrence. County Manager Fernando Macias, Sheriff Kim Stewart, and NMSU Criminal Justice Professor Dennis Giever provided a range of information. The program planning meeting in February was successful in identifying numerous suggestions for updating our local position statements. Our Affordable Housing Committee prepared comments for several Las Cruces City Council meetings advocating that the city more actively seek public input on the work that is being done to update the Land Development Code and that the code eliminate restrictions on accessory dwelling units and other options that limit housing for the missing middle. We also requested that affordable housing be considered for inclusion in the General Obligation Bond that is expected to be presented to voters in November.

NM Listens We held the first of our NM Listens conversations in February, meeting with two groups of NMSU students who are taking an Introduction to Sociology course. Participants were majoring in various fields and ranged from dual credit students to a parent of teenagers. The questions posed related to what democracy means, what is working and not working, and civic issues/social concerns of interest to the students. In preparation for this event several League members participated in facilitator training and learned from one of our new members how to more effectively use Zoom and Google tools. A second session with these students is planned for mid-March and sessions with a group of honors college students will occur in April.

Los Alamos

By Barbara Calef, Co-President

The Los Alamos County Council, in response to a citizen petition, formed the Los Alamos Resiliency and Environmental Sustainability Task Force (LARES) in January 2020. The purpose of the committee was to produce a plan “to present specific measurable, achievable, and timely recommendations” for Los Alamos to pursue in order to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction goals set forth by the governor. On February 22 the task force gave their final presentation to the County Council, outlining their recommendations and a suggested budget detailed in their 200-page final report. The League had written to the Council urging the members to adopt the recommendations and to include the budget requests in the hearings scheduled for April. The Council not only accepted the recommendations; they also directed the County Manager to begin collecting data and to seek to identify near-term opportunities immediately.

The LWVLA board is thrilled to announce that we will have a first vice-president for the first time in 13 years. Felicia Orth has volunteered for that position. The board also welcomes our new webmasters, Helena Whyte and Madhavi Garimella, and our new newsletter editor, Robert Williams. Eduardo Santiago has volunteered to edit and post our videos.

Economic Development Coordinator Dan Ungerleider spoke at the January LWL program. His focus is on the need for housing and jobs and giving support for the changing business environment. In addition, he is tasked with marketing the community as a good place to visit, live and start a business. He listed the five housing projects currently underway in the County. The surge in demand is largely due to the expansion of the LANL workforce.

In February the new superintendent of Bandelier was the speaker. Patrick Suddath was born in Albuquerque and went to school in Las Cruces, but has spent the last 30 years out of the state, most recently at Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia. He announced that Bandelier National Monument and the Valles Caldera National Preserve administrations will be closely aligned and that he will supervise the Valles Caldera superintendent. Many projects are underway to update Bandelier’s infrastructure and improve programming. During the pandemic it has been difficult to adequately staff the park, but visitation has ballooned.

League members met on January 24 to discuss ideas for program in the next year. There were no suggestions

to amend any positions or for new studies. Instead, the group discussed current issues where we might give input based on our positions and compiled a list. Based on that discussion, we encouraged the County Council to adopt the recommendations of Task Force on Resiliency, Energy, and Sustainability when they delivered their final report to the Council in February. The group agreed that the League should schedule more frequent program planning sessions. The next one should take place in June.

We reviewed the LWVUS program planning survey and agreed that we support the Campaign for Making Democracy Work, specifically voting rights, improving elections, redistricting, and money in politics. In addition, we recommended concurrence with the Connecticut position on broadband and the New York health care position and endorsed the LWVC request for an increase in LWVUS lobbying efforts to support legislation for comprehensive immigration reform and expanded paths to citizenship. We also called for a resolution to advocate for making election officials nonpartisan.



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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.