



La Palabra

The newsletter of the League of Women Voters of New Mexico

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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

Climate Change in New Mexico: Seizing the Opportunities

Friday, August 21, 2009, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
George Pearl Hall, University of New Mexico
Central and Stanford SE, Albuquerque

**New Mexico Congressional Delegation and
Governor Richardson invited.**

Symposium fee, with box lunch included, is \$20
Scholarships available — Seating is limited

RSVP to attend: <http://www.lwvnm.org> **OR**
Lora Lucero, director, Natural Resources
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[Loralucero\(AT\)aol.com](mailto:Loralucero(AT)aol.com) or (505) 247-0844

Come join New Mexico residents and leaders in a symposium to discuss what needs to be done to confront climate change with meaningful policies, laws, and actions.

This symposium is funded in part by:
Oxfam America, the League of Women Voters Education Fund,
and the Sierra Club, Rio Grande Chapter

The Problem: The concentration of greenhouse gases (GHG) in the atmosphere now far exceeds the natural range for such gases over the last 650,000 years. Climate change is happening more rapidly than anyone expected. Increasing GHG emissions could decrease albedo (reflectivity) and increase the rate of absorption of solar energy near the poles, increase water vapor concentrations in the atmosphere, melt Arctic tundra, release stores of carbon from soils and sea floors, and accelerate the melting of ice. We could reach a tipping point where we could have a runaway climate change, with releases of carbon (especially methane) from natural reservoirs greatly exceeding emissions from burning fossil fuels.

The impacts in New Mexico will be severe. By 2100, temperatures in New Mexico could increase by 3-5°F. Higher temperatures and

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: LWVNM Legislative Priorities for 2009

The 2009 state Convention in Albuquerque has come and gone, and we have a new board with some new faces and a lot of familiar faces too. Delegates elected four officers and four directors, who together with the four local League presidents (LWVCNM having the luxury of having two of them!) comprise our state board. I thank everyone who has committed their time and energy to LWVNM for the next two years.

Even if you are not able to commit to being a full-time board member, we hope to enlist your talents on some shorter term projects.

- Lora Lucero, whose article leads this issue, is looking for help on and before August 21 with the exciting all-day symposium, "Climate Change in New Mexico: Seizing the Opportunities," to be held on the main UNM campus in Albuquerque. There are many tasks to be done in putting on this event.
- Molly Seibel of LWVSFC has offered to set up a pilot project using Capwiz, an on-line advocacy and communication tool. An anonymous donor interested in voter protection is funding Capwiz for the twenty states included in the LWVUS Public Advocacy for Voter Protection (PAVP) project, of which New Mexico is one. Look for a message soon!
- We have also received a grant from the PAVP program to advocate for voter protection during the upcoming year. We would like to hear from you with suggestions for using this money. And the important position of program chair for election issues remains unfilled.
- We are putting together a finance committee to address some of the concerns expressed during Convention. We have existing policies on finance and fundraising, but they fail to address some key issues.
- Next year we will need a *Voters Guide* editor to coordinate statewide information for the 2010 general election, and following the election we will need someone to update our *Voters Key*.
- After LWVNM moved its office from Santa Fe to Albuquerque, we gave almost 60 years' worth of records to the Center for Southwest Research at UNM. Twyla Reisig, archivist for the Center, has done a heroic job of sorting through this material. We need to continue to archive our most important records, hopefully more systematically than during our first 60 years.

So, if you have a little time to spare, consider volunteering for one of these activities. Some come with detailed job descriptions while other tasks such as archiving need definition. Some need to be completed soon, while the timing of others can be arranged to suit participants. Please consider if you have a little time to give to your state League. Contact me or any board member for more information.

Kathy Campbell, President (ksmithcamp@cybemesa.com)

In Memory of Elizabeth Best

Elizabeth Best was the embodiment of the League of Women Voters for many years - being on the County Council and the School Board, speaking out on issues of education and social justice, and in the last 15 years working tirelessly on issues of sustainability. She was well known to and respected by the Legislative Education Study Committee for her tireless lobbying in that area on behalf of the League. When I visited her a few weeks ago, she was cheerfully working on a document that reflected her views on sustainability. She is the epitome of a life well lived to the very end.

Rebecca Shankland

Climate Change Symposium *(Continued from page 1)*

increased frequency of heat waves may increase the number of heat-related deaths and illnesses. Warmer temperatures could mean less winter snowfall, more winter rain, and a faster, earlier spring snowmelt leaving New Mexicans high and dry in summer months when they most need water resources for irrigation and municipal supplies. Today's droughts may be tomorrow's normal season.

Congress Acts: In March, U.S. Representatives Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.) and Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) introduced the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 (ACES Act) that narrowly passed the House by a vote of 219 to 212 on June 26. As a sign of the compromises made by the sponsors to win support, the bill grew from 648 pages to 1,400 pages when it was finally passed.

ACES establishes a framework to curb global warming and transition America to a clean energy economy by setting a cap on future GHG emissions at 3% below 2005 levels in 2012, increasing to 17% below 2005 levels in 2020, 42% below 2005 levels in 2030, reaching 83% below 2005 levels by 2050. This is a beginning, but many scientists and environmentalists believe we need far deeper cuts sooner to head off disaster from warming temperatures, rising sea levels and other climate changes.

After the narrow passage of ACES in the House, League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) President Mary Wilson said, "Make no mistake, this is both a jobs bill and an environmental bill. The House has recognized that we must move America and the world toward clean energy, green jobs, and a safer environment." In the days leading up to the final vote, a number of changes were made in the legislation to placate members of Congress who voiced the concerns of special interests. Coal and agricultural interests made major inroads in the legislation, which Wilson condemned. "Too many members fell under the spell of special interest pleading, especially on agriculture and coal," she said, vowing to seek improvements as the legislation goes to the Senate.

The Senate will likely act on global warming and energy legislation by September 28. The next few

weeks provide our window of opportunity to make a real difference.

Next Steps? First, **stay informed!** Our ability to act effectively requires each of us to understand the seriousness of this challenge. If you are a Netflix subscriber, check out "The Big Energy Gamble" (2009), a "Nova" special that examines California's strategies for dealing with climate change and asks whether these strategies can be applied to the nation as a whole. There are some excellent papers on www.lwv.org. If you find information that would be helpful for other League members, share them with me for posting on the LWVNM website.

Second, **speak out!** There is a strong campaign underway by special interests committed to preserving the status quo. They want to convince decision-makers and the public that climate change/energy legislation will hurt our economy. We know the costs of inaction are even greater and new green jobs present wonderful opportunities for New Mexicans and the nation. Our local papers need to hear from League members with letters to the editor. Don't let this important debate continue without making your voice heard. Our members of Congress need to hear from us, too. Establishing the declining cap, based on science and without loopholes, is the single most important issue in climate change and energy legislation.

Third, **Join us on August 21!**

Post 2009 Convention (May 16-17, 2009)

The minutes of the business part of the LWVNM Convention in Albuquerque, May 16-17, 2009, have been posted at www.lwvnm.org. Thank you to LWVUS for hosting us this year, for doing the hard work of arranging space and preparing materials, and especially for the lovely reception at Diane and Don Goldfarb's house on Friday evening. Thanks also to all the speakers. These included Jody Larson, former president of LWVUS, who told us about the Santa Fe Transparency Project; Carolie Mullan, our LWVUS liaison, on developing League leadership; Ruth Hoffman, director of the Lutheran Advocacy

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Post 2009 Convention *(Continued from page 3)*

Ministry NM, on the state operating budget; and Doug Fernandez of KOAT-TV, our banquet speaker.

Two resolutions were presented to Convention delegates for consideration. Like the national League, we had no procedure for resolutions. For this convention, the resolutions were treated like “non-recommended program”, but at its July meeting, the board approved a new procedure, that can be found at www.lwvnm.org/board.html along with other policy documents, minutes of board meetings, and draft portfolios.

One of the resolutions asked the national board to allow local and state Leagues to support single payer legislation. This resolution was duly forwarded to Mary Wilson and our national board liaison Carolie Mullan. Several other state conventions passed similar resolutions this year. We have received no direct response, but it is perhaps noteworthy that the national board has now taken a position in support of the “public option” instead of limiting itself to arguing for general principles.

We also managed to get through a package of 17 amendments to the bylaws, and the second resolution authorized the bylaws committee to propose, and the board to accept, minor, non-substantive corrections to the bylaws without bringing them to Convention. The board approved a handful of such corrections at its July board meeting.

Officers

President: Kathy Campbell
Vice-President: Linda Moscarella
Secretary: Jennice Fishburn
Treasurer: Cheryl Haaker

Elected Directors

Action Co-Chair: Richard Mason
Membership: Caroline Jackson
Health Care: Vicki Simons
Natural Resources: Lora Lucero

Nominating Committee

Rebecca Shankland, Chair
Johnnie Aldrich, Elected Member
JoAnne Ramponi, Elected Member

Education: School Funding Formula

Jane Gaziano, director, Education

During the 2005 legislative session, the Funding Formula Task Force was created to study the current education funding formula. Concerns included the alignment of the Training and Experience (T&E) Index with the 3-tiered licensure system for teachers, recognition of instructional support providers, and the fiscal difficulties of small school districts. The American Institutes for Research (AIR) was contracted to oversee the study. Their recommendations were based on the premise that districts and charter schools should be ensured sufficient resources to provide a comprehensive instructional program designed to meet the needs of all students. A cost estimate to achieve this was approximated at \$350 million above the current level. The resulting HB 241 of 2008 proposed that the state move from a formula based on multiple program factors to a formula with fewer factors that are based on indicators of student need. HB 241 failed as did the 2009 attempt, HB 331. HB 241 was accompanied by several funding bills. An attempt to fund the formula in 2009 by virtue of an increase in the GRT tax also failed.

The meeting of the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) on June 23 was the first in the interim to take up future steps in advancing reform of the education funding formula and finding revenue sources. Efforts will be focused on use of the Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS) as a budget accountability tool, funding options, and securing support of the business community.

After review of the failed legislation of the past two years, three economists from the Department of Taxation and Revenue fielded questions by the committee. They reinforced the goal that funding should be independent of the wealth of any community. They also mentioned the imbalance presented by the fact that the revenue derived by Gross Receipts Tax (GRT) is three times that from income tax and property tax in New Mexico. New funding avenues will need to be explored. They had no easy answer

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National League Holds First Electronic Council - *Jan Bray and Cheryl Haaker*

All it took to participate in the LWVUS Council 2009 was a computer with speakers, a fast Internet connection, a telephone, and \$150 registration fee. Jan Bray and Kathy Campbell were the NM delegates. Cheryl Haaker hosted the Brays and others in Albuquerque, while Kathy logged in from Los Alamos. Participants logged in to a designated URL. Then the Council page came up and the software called back to establish the phone connection. Most of the discussion was broadcast over the phone, but pre-recorded video presentations were played over the computer's speakers. The web page showed presentation material, like an overhead projector display. There was an option to "raise your hand" which added you to the queue to speak to an issue. Speakers were called upon in turn and their telephones activated for talking. New sections of the page opened to show the text of motions and pop-ups to vote.

The budget was adopted after some discussion. Voluminous and thorough budget materials had been distributed in advance. A proposed rule on resolutions for the 2010 National Convention was adopted.

Judy Duffy, Advocacy Chair, presented the advocacy priorities. The Leagues top priorities are health care and global climate change; its secondary priorities are Washington, D.C. voting and election administration reform, which will be taken up if significant success is possible. LWVUS contacted all members of the House early in the session to support comprehensive health care reform that includes universal coverage, cost containment, and quality care. Over 7,000 emails were sent through Action Alert on health care and budgetary funding. However, no specific bill was backed. Several states voiced discontent with this strategy as there was a bill introduced that embodied in strong form most of our position items – especially a preference for single payer.

There was much work on global climate change and the American Clean Energy and Security Act (ACES) which has now passed the House of Representatives. The Climate Task Force developed materials for Leagues to use on this issue.

There was also a list of Education Fund projects, especially Vote411 and Public Advocacy for Voter Protection (PAVP), Promoting a Fair and Independent Judiciary, and information and transparency audits of local governments. (The Santa Fe League was invited by its county commission to do one.)

Several states gave directions to the Board to try to get back into the presidential debates. Jan suggested doing one-on-one interviews with the candidates and putting it on YouTube.

The entire proceedings are archived online at www.lwv.org. Select "For Members" from the top blue navigation bar, then choose "Council & Convention" from the left side navigation panel.

Your Per Member Payment at Work

Carolie Mullan, Liaison, LWVUS

Referring to the per member payment (PMP), a League member asked recently, "What is LWVUS doing with my dues?" The local League collects the PMP and apportions it to their local League, to the state League and LWVUS in amounts assessed by delegates at state and national conventions, as well as by those attending local annual meetings.

The short answer to the question is that LWVUS is doing a lot with PMPs, but the results are not always obvious to members. The League operates at three levels—national, state and local—and each level has specific responsibilities that can only be achieved at that particular level, which include many of the LWVUS activities funded by the PMP.

Advocacy is an excellent example. Local Leagues advocate on local issues with local government entities, state Leagues take action on state issues with state legislatures and agencies, and the national League addresses national issues with Congress and federal agencies.

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Per Member Payment at Work

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Advocacy at the local level often requires less time and expense than is needed at state and national levels. The action portion of the LWVUS budget is considerable, even with the excellent and able assistance of the volunteer League Lobby Corps, made up of members from Leagues in the Washington, D.C. area.

LWVUS limits advocacy efforts by setting priorities based on member input at the beginning of each legislative year (January). This year's top priorities are global climate change and health care. Election reform and Washington, D.C. voting rights are secondary and will be acted on if significant success is possible, although the top priorities always take precedence. The League is watching other issues (see www.lwv.org) for action only if good opportunities present themselves.

Action Committee – Dick Mason, Chair

National called on state Leagues to send out action alerts to congressional leaders in support of a health care public plan, and we complied. Also, at the urging of national, we generated calls to congressmen about the energy bill, American Clean Energy and Security Act (ACES).

On the state level, January 26, 2010, was selected for League Day at the Legislature. I will reserve the use of the Land Office facilities for our meeting, and request a table at the Round House for a League display. The interim committees meetings are ongoing this summer, and appropriate League members have been notified about the schedule and location. Central New Mexico League will sponsor a Lobbying Training Session on December 5. Watch the local VOTER for details.

On February 14, 2010, the national League celebrates its 90th birthday. At the recent electronic meeting, the Board decided that planning for a

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Education: School Funding Formula *(Continued from page 4)*

to the dismay of the committee. They agreed that the main factors to be used to evaluate future sources should be predictability, reliability, and impact on economic development. Analysis also should consider the total household burden at various income levels.

Two representatives of the business community expressed concern with accountability and any tax impacts on business and economic development. Also of concern is securing funds to hold harmless any district that will be a "loser" under the new formula. Shunning the GRT and its business-to-business tax impact, they suggested increasing income tax and ending a business deduction as other states have already done.

Secretary Garcia mentioned that 25% of 89 districts this past year received emergency supplemental funding, reinforcing the need to reform the funding formula. Physical Education, pre-k, 3-tiered licensing, increased fixed cost, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), responses to intervention, and unfunded mandates account for much of the districts' shortfalls. She explained that the EPSS is not currently tied to the budget process except for those schools in restructuring. Under the new plan, the EPSS will direct all funds except those based on poverty, English language learners, mobility, special education, and a few other cost factors. The department is conducting a pilot project involving 26 districts and 2 charter schools.

The EPSS is a district-level, student-centered, long-range strategic plan to improve academic achievement and success for all students. It is implemented at the school level through site-specific school plans developed by each public school, and both the school plans and the EPSS take into account the importance of parental and community involvement in public education." (LESC Staff report: Proposed Public School Funding Formula" 6/22/09)

Action Committee *Continued from page 6)*

celebration will be the responsibility of the Action Committee. February 14th is a Sunday near the end of the Legislative Session (January 19-February 18). At its next meeting, the Action Committee will brainstorm ideas about this celebration including holding something special during League Day at the Legislature, January 26.

The Action Committee is now holding monthly meetings. Time of teleconferences are advertised through the LWVNM Action listserv.

Consensus Questions for LWVNM Water Study - *Barbara Calef, Director*

Consensus meetings for the LWVNM Water Study will be held this fall. Background material and more detailed discussion points will be posted at www.lwvnm.org/water.html.

What elements of “public welfare” are most important?

The NM Water Code states that “public welfare” must be taken into account in the allocation of water, but the term has never been formally defined in New Mexico at the state level. Most of the regional water plans do include a statement defining “public welfare” for that region. They reveal a number of shared values but also considerable variation in emphasis, and in some regions they generated considerable controversy. Can LWVNM arrive at consensus on a definition of “public welfare”, specifically, on the values that should guide the allocation and reallocation of water in our state?

What should be the role of regional water planning?

New Mexico recently completed its first set of regional water plans. Originally

intended to prevent the transfer of unallocated water out of state, the plans focus on addressing the gap between supply and demand. They were created with significant opportunity for public participation and include discussions of alternatives available to meet demand. However, they suffer from a shortage of the accurate data necessary to create realistic water budgets; they generally lack an implementation plan; and there are incompatibilities among some of the plans where regions anticipate meeting demand with transfers from other parts of the state. What should be the future for these regional plans?

How should land use be tied to water availability?

In New Mexico, the Office of the State Engineer (OSE) is responsible for water administration while the cities and counties make decisions about land use. There is currently no structure for coordination between the two levels of government. Effectively, land use policy within the cities and counties determines the demand for water. The establishment of mechanisms linking land development with water planning could give some protection to traditional communities as well as help to avoid further destruction of the aquifers, greater fragmentation of the landscape, and the loss of additional aquatic ecosystems. The question is how to achieve that goal.

Why conserve water?

There is general agreement that water is a scarce resource in New Mexico, and that there is a water deficit in the Middle Rio Grande basin, the fastest growing area of the state. But confronting these limits and taking conservation seriously raises the question: conservation for what? Who will benefit? How can we ensure that the benefits as well as the sacrifice are shared in ways that reflect public values?

Report from the Webmaster - Cheryl Haaker

What happened at LWVNM Convention in May?

The minutes have been posted to the lwvnm.org website. There is also a photo page, showing (in full color!) some scenes and highlights plus your new Board. Carolie Mullan from LWVUS brought us a Resource CD; its contents have been posted as well. See it all at www.lwvnm.org/Convention2009/.



Keep Up Between Issues of *La Palabra!* The state newsletter comes out four times a year; your local *Voters* are monthly, but you can be up to the minute by subscribing to one or more of LWVNM's email listserves.

LWVNM Topics gives general news on activities, events, volunteer opportunities, and advocacy at the state level.

LWVNM Action is geared to lobbying efforts, with most activity when the legislature or congress is in session.

LWVNM Fair is the list for the Fair Representation Study Group, currently working on education and advocacy related to redistricting and the 2010 Census.

Consider signing up! If you don't like it, you can easily unsubscribe – we won't keep spamming you. Just go to www.lwvnm.org/links.html and select the list(s) you'd like to try – or to leave.

Fair Representation Study Group - Cheryl Haaker, Chair

We Want You!

2010 will be the year that the study group works to inform the public about the importance of the 2010 Census and the subsequent 2011 redrawing of New Mexico's congressional, legislative, and Public Regulation Commission districts.



In preparation for the Census, New Mexico county clerks are checking their precincts and

adjusting boundaries as needed to split precincts that are too large, change borders that give the precinct a non-compact shape, and modify boundaries to conform with new laws. This, by a law enacted in the 2009 legislative session, must be completed by September 1, 2009. Census forms will be mailed in March 2010. On April 1, 2011, the detailed results will be released to the states and redistricting will begin.

The study group is making plans for a year-long educational outreach program that will extend across the state. To be most effective, the group needs to grow to include more members in more areas. Possible activities include designing informational materials, giving presentations to small groups, hosting forums, coordinating with local news media to spread the word, collaborating with other groups who share the League's goals on redistricting, and more.

The Fair Representation Study Group meets monthly in Albuquerque and via teleconference on approximately the fourth Wednesday of the month (see the LWVNM Calendar for details). Check out the web page [at www.lwvnm.org/fair/](http://www.lwvnm.org/fair/). Sign up for the Listserve, *LWVNM Fair*. Join in!

Redistricting Activities Across the Country

Judith Binder, Fair Representation Committee

State Leagues have been promoting legislative reforms in preparation for redistricting that will come as a result of the 2010 census. LWVPA partnered with Common Cause and local organizations seeking a legislative change rather than a constitutional amendment—a stopgap until a constitutional amendment can be passed. As it stands, a constitutional amendment that would be effective following the 2020 census stands a better chance of being passed now as legislators won't feel they would be "losing their seats." Although the League wants legislation that will apply to both state and congressional districts, there were concerns that some provisions could be challenged as unconstitutional. Some may be accused of being Idealistic instead of looking at reality; however, without idealism, there would be no progress. [with Andrea Mulrine, LWVPA President 2007-09].

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Why We Need A Strong National Public Plan Option

Katherine Campbell, President, League of Women Voters of New Mexico

(Note: This article was prepared with the help of Dick Mason, and statistics are taken from "Is the Public Plan Option a Necessary Part of Health Reform?", John Holahan and Linda J. Blumberg, Urban Institute of Health Policy Center, www.healthpolicycenter.org.)

On July 30th Medicare celebrates the birthday of one of our most important government programs. Medicare successfully provides health care to an extremely vulnerable segment of the population. These are the people over 65 years of age who typically have diminishing incomes and increasing health problems.

Before Medicare only 44% of seniors had health insurance; now a mere 1% of this same group lacks coverage. Before Medicare 29% of people 65 years of age or older lived in poverty; after, their poverty level fell to about 10% and is holding there, despite dramatic increases in out of pocket medical expenses. Before Medicare, life expectancy was 70 years of age; by 2005 it was 77.4 years of age.

Medicare was an example of bold government action that led to the betterment of life for millions of people. Let's follow the grand tradition of Medicare and include a strong national public plan option as part of comprehensive federal health care reform.

We need an effective public plan for many reasons. First, consolidation of health insurance companies and health care providers has led to less competition. A 2008 study done for the American Medical Association found that 94% of the 314 metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) studied were highly concentrated according to Department of Justice/Federal Trade Commission standards. In 15 states a single insurer controlled more than 50% of the market. Provider markets, particularly hospital markets, have also become increasingly concentrated, contributing significantly to rising costs. An effective national public plan option will provide much needed competition to an ever more concentrated health insurance market and bargaining power with the provider market.

Second, a strong national public plan option would have lower administrative costs. A 2006 Congressional Budget Office study concluded that Medicare Advantage plans had average administrative costs of 11% while traditional Medicare had administrative costs of only 2%. Because of the complexity of serving a diverse, non-elderly population, the public plan administrative costs would be greater than 2%, but it is safe to say that its administrative costs would be at least 5% lower than private alternatives.

Third, the public plan would strengthen the ability of the government to contain costs. In order to gain market share and to ensure that enough providers will participate in the public plan, compensation rates for the public plan will have to be greater than for Medicare. But the gap between what Medicare pays and what

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Redistricting Activities *(Continued from page 8)*

With population shifting, Ohio may lose up to two U.S. Representatives, and to change the current redistricting system, the Ohio General Assembly must pass a resolution to put the new plan on the ballot. In March, LWV Ohio partnered with Citizen Action, Common Cause, and individuals including the Secretary of State, a former and a current state representative, and a professor of Political Science at Ohio State University to organize a redistricting contest. The competition proved that an open process based on complying with the Voting Rights Act and objective criteria, could produce fair legislative districts. The

judges used a mathematical model to determine compactness. They compared the perimeter of a district with the area inside of it, thus minimizing bizarrely shaped areas. All districts needed to be contiguous, contain equal population (within .5%), and maximize the number of legislative districts that could be won by either party. There was an allowance of 5% deviation in the population from district to district (47.5% – 52.5%).

About 80 people took the training and, of the 14 maps submitted, three were eliminated for technical failures, while 11 plans met all criteria. To view the winning plans, go to: [with Ann Henkener, Legislative Director, LWV Ohio, <http://www.ohioedistricting.org/>].

LOCAL LEAGUE NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENTS

Central New Mexico - *Jan and Olin Bray*

LWV of Central New Mexico has observed the Albuquerque City Charter Reform Commission. We testified in favor of a number of the proposed amendments – especially clarification and simplification of compliance procedures for public financing for city council and mayoral candidates. We did an action alert to our Albuquerque members asking the city council to override the mayor's veto of all of the proposed amendments. We had a letter to the editor in the *Albuquerque Journal* supporting public financing of elections. An observer corps has been established for the Sandoval County Commission. We have done several action alerts in support of our drug and pain policy positions. We have revised our guidelines for holding forums. We had Attorney General Gary King speak for Sunshine Week. We also had units on ethics reform at the state and local level. Congressman Martin Heinrich was the speaker at our annual meeting. This summer we had general meetings on immigration reform, tracking the stimulus money in New Mexico with Toney Anaya who is responsible for tracking the funds, and a report on the Albuquerque Public Schools by Superintendent Winston Brooks. **And we moved our office to 2315 San Pedro NE, Suite F-6.**

Greater Las Cruces - *Bonnie Burn*

All this in a span of one week. We participated in a forum, "Use and Purpose of American Power in the 21st Century," facilitated by Will Ferroggiaro, Senior Associate at Fund for Peace. The League was one of three local organizations to sponsor separate dialogue meetings throughout the city. Bob Burn and I traveled to Hobbs, NM, to participate in a one-day conference on renewable energy sponsored by New Mexico Tech and New Mexico Junior College. We returned with a better understanding of the discourse about renewable energy and the role that New Mexico has in this developing industry. Marnie Leverett and I met with Congressman Harry Teague to introduce the League's position on climate change.

Our newly elected Board welcomed two new League members, Roberta Gran, Treasurer, and Pat Pedersen, director, Membership. Our Lunch with a Leader program gave us an opportunity to

make recommendations to the Metropolitan Planning Organization that is updating its five-year transportation plan. In July, Lora Lucero made a presentation about building coalitions and the efforts that lead to the defeat of the SunCal tax increment development district (TIDD) during the 2009 legislative session.

Many of us have sent emails and made telephone calls about federal climate change legislation. Marnie Leverett and I, along with others, met with Congressman Teague and a staff from Senator Udall's local office about proposed legislation that would grant wilderness designation to certain areas of Doña Ana County. Vicki Simons and I had several meetings with Congressman Teague's staff about health care. Our Health Care Reform Committee sponsored a well received two-hour evening public forum, Health Care Reform: Legislative Options, on July 15 that drew an audience of 110 that included some local and state elected officials and staff members for our congressional leaders. Along with our League position, presentations about federal legislation, options for health care delivery, and the potential need for state health care reform were made.

Los Alamos - *Barbara Calef*

State Senator Peter Wirth was the speaker at the Los Alamos League's Annual Meeting this year. The 2009 Session was his first in the Senate; prior to that he served in the House for four years, having succeeded Max Coll.

Senator Wirth told his audience that Obama's platform, Manny Aragon's conviction, and the cloud over Richardson all contributed to creating a "perfect storm" leading to the passage of ethics reform bills in New Mexico this year. The campaign limits legislation that he sponsored will go into effect after the gubernatorial election in 2010. A bill requiring disclosure of campaign contributions prior to an election passed, as well as a requirement to open conference committees.

Due to the passage of the federal stimulus package during the NM legislative session, many of the energy bills introduced this year were successful. Solar tax credits, green energy jobs,

and green energy bonds all passed. The Renewable Energy Financing District Act successfully carried by Senator Wirth creates a financing program that will enable homeowners and businesses to install a solar system (photovoltaic, thermal, geothermal) without having to pay thousands of dollars in up-front costs.

Speaking about the legislative process in New Mexico, Senator Wirth commented that the Senate is less partisan than the House. Having shepherded bills through the Senate, his experience in the House helped him to push the bills there. Overall, the process in New Mexico is unsatisfactory. There are hundreds of bills, no time to read them all, ridiculous hours. He was “running” 25 bills during the session. “We get what we pay for”, he said.

After a one-year experiment with an executive committee, the Los Alamos League has returned to the traditional form of leadership with a president at the head of the board. We will make an effort this year to create a framework that will better serve governance by committee in the future.

Santa Fe County - Meredith Machen

Transparency Study: Last year, the Santa Fe League of Women Voters (LWVSFC) was invited to make recommendations to the County about improving its transparency. LWVSFC members and representatives from the American Civil Liberties Union and the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government worked diligently to study practices, policies, and programs in order to identify areas for improvement. The Transparency Study Committee identified the New Mexico Open

Meetings and Public Records Acts as the relevant statutes for the scope of the audits. Committee members interviewed many county staff about the organizational climate regarding transparency and sought input from county residents and the local media to supplement the formal audit data. Not only is the county commendable for requesting this study, but also it is notable that the county manager set to work immediately, creating task forces and directing staff to address the various concerns brought up in the report.

On November 11, there will be a LWVSFC brown bag lunch unit meeting on the consensus questions connected to this study that also has implications for our a new study on local government referenda. Transparency in governmental operations is the first step in promoting more citizen involvement and participation in decision-making. We hope it will prove valuable to other entities in furthering their transparency efforts in simple but important ways such as improving their website layouts and helpfulness, providing adequate notice of meetings, posting minutes of meetings, making records readily available upon request, and hosting public forums. The complete report and the local news story are on www.lwvsfc.org website.

LWVSFC solicited and received a small grant from LWVUS to support the publication of the study, that has received high praise from the local media, the state League, and other entities.

LWVSFC is sponsoring a public forum on health care reform on August 26, 6:30-8 pm.

Why Public Plan Option *(Continued from page 9)*

private insurers pay is wide enough to give the public plan plenty of room to lower costs through negotiations. The public plan will also give the government greater ability to reinforce and reward best practices.

Because of the opposition to the public plan from insurance companies and large providers, some in Congress are proposing alternatives. These include reducing the rate-setting power of the public plan or setting up nongovernmental entities that would create insurance plans with negotiated provider payment rates. These proposals overlook the fact that the cost containment potential of the public plan depends on the ability to use the power of the federal government, as a large purchaser, to ensure provider participation and to reduce payment rates.

In trying to undercut public support for a strong public plan option, large providers and insurance companies are representing their own interests and those of their investors, as is their fiduciary duty. But we, as citizens, have a right to expect that our elected officials will do their jobs and represent us, the people who elected them. That means standing up for a strong national public plan.

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LWVNM BOARD CALENDAR - 2009-2010

- August 21** Climate Change Symposium (p. 1)
- September 12** Board Meeting, Albuquerque
10 a.m.-3 p.m. - Strategic Planning
Manzano Multigenerational Center
501 Elizabeth SE
- November 14** Board Meeting, Socorro
12:30 - 5:30 p.m. - Skeen Library
New Mexico Tech
- January 9, 2010** Board Meeting, Albuquerque
10 a.m.-3 p.m.
- January 26** League Day at the Legislature
- February 14** LWV 90th Birthday
- March 13** Board Meeting, Socorro
12:30 - 5:30 p.m. - Skeen Library
New Mexico Technology University
- May 15** LWVNM Council - Santa Fe
- May 15** Board Meeting after Council

Silent Auction a Hit -

Andrea Targhetta and Terry Quinn

During our LWVNM Convention in Albuquerque, we held a silent auction all day Saturday, May 16, and through the banquet that night. The list of winners was posted on Sunday. There were thirty-seven pieces up for auction and the state league garnered \$891! Thank you to all who donated an article, and thank you to all who purchased these items.

Nominating Committee

Rebecca Shankland, Chair
Johnnie Aldrich, Elected Member
JoAnne Ramponi, Elected Member

To contact chair with proposed nominees:
Email: nominations@lwvnm.org