



La Palabra

The newsletter of the League of Women Voters of New Mexico

VOL. 57 No. 3 WINTER 2010

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The League of Women Voters of New Mexico, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy

League Day at the Legislature LWVUS 90th Birthday Celebration

*Tuesday, January 26, 2010, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
New Mexico State Land Office - Morgan Hall
310 Old Santa Fe Trail, Santa Fe
(just down the street from the Round House)*

The thirty-day 2010 legislative session will begin on January 19 and end on February 18. This short session is limited to budget items and legislation that the Governor puts on his Call. We expect that the ethics commission and domestic partnership may be added to the Governor's Call. Key to this session, however, is legislation that creates new revenue sources to meet the current state budget. The LWVNM Legislative Action Committee prioritized the League's legislation of interest: ethics reform, including state ethics commission legislation, and a budget balancing process that is fair to all. On ethics reform LWVNM will collaborate with ThinkNM on its proposal to limit contributions from those who lobby or do business with the state. Legislation identifying new revenue sources will be supported if it falls within our League position.

We encourage you to attend. Not only do we need your voice to advocate for the League's legislative priorities but also to celebrate the League's 90th birthday. A Memorial in recognition of this milestone will be passed by the Legislature.

Please plan to attend. Although reservations are not required, we would like to have an idea of the number of attendees. Please e-mail Dick Mason at [polirich\(AT\)aol.com](mailto:polirich(AT)aol.com); or call the office at 505-884-8441. Also, visit the LWVNM website, www.lwvnm.org, for further information.

Accommodations: **Garrett's Desert Inn**, which is located across the street from the Land Office at 311 Old Santa Fe Trail, offers a legislative rate of \$49 plus tax. That doesn't include breakfast, but they have an attached restaurant. There may be a charge of \$8.00 for parking if you check out the morning of League Day. Call 1-800-888-2145 to make a reservation.

(Continued on page 3)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: LWVNM Program Planning

Unlike the local and national Leagues, LWVNM does not generally engage in a formal program planning exercise. However, in addition to approving NM legislative priorities and overseeing state studies, LWVNM is entitled to submit a response as part of the national pre-convention program planning process. Although the state board will not initiate any national study proposals, we do plan to review proposals from other Leagues, including NM Leagues, that are circulating as of LWVNM's January 9 meeting in order to decide if we would like to endorse any of them. Be sure to let us know the results of your local program planning meetings if they occur before then.

The board decided at its November meeting to send a letter to the LWVUS board urging it to make passage of the Fair Election Now Act (H.R. 1826 and S. 752) a priority in 2010. The state board feels that while the national priorities for 2009--health care and climate change--are indeed urgent issues, it has become apparent that adequate progress on these and other issues will not be possible as long as members of Congress depend on large donations from well-endowed special interests for their election. The national Board's prioritization process, which is separate from national program planning, is discussed by our LWVUS liaison Carolie Mullan in this issue (see p. 11).

State legislative priorities for 2010 will be finalized by the board in January. The 2010 legislative session is a 30-day session that can consider only matters related to budget or items that are placed on the Governor's Call. LWVNM is part of the Better Choices for New Mexico coalition promoting a balanced approach to address the expected FY2011 budget shortfall; see Dick Mason's article in this issue (p. 4). The Governor's Call may also include legislation to create a State Ethics Commission as well as legislation to ban campaign contributions from lobbyists and state contractors proposed by Think New Mexico. However, there may be limited scope for lobbying for other League issues such as domestic partnership legislation, health care (apart from things like Medicaid that fall under the budget), or environmental issues.

Our only 2009-2011 state study on Water Supply and Demand in New Mexico will conclude with a proposed position statement presented to the state Board by the study committee in March, following a series of unit meetings with local Leagues. Where should we go from here? Lora Lucero is reviewing our natural resources position, and our state finance and education positions are also in need of review and updating. New and existing studies with more than minor updates cannot be adopted until our state convention in 2011. However, it takes significant effort to put together a study proposal, including assembling a resource committee, so it is not too early to begin thinking about directions you would like to offer for state program in 2011.

Kathy Campbell

Capwiz Now Available to LWVNM

In 2008, LWVNM was added to the LWVUS Public Advocacy for Voter Protection (PAVP) Program and as part of LWVUS support for New Mexico, Capwiz was made available to us.

Capwiz, developed by Capitol Advantage, is the tool that UWVUS uses to send out national action alerts to League members and others. It allows members to email, mail, or FAX letters to elected officials, usually with the option to modify suggested text. The underlying database matches members with their congressional or legislative representatives.

Molly Seibel of LWVSFC volunteered to do the non-trivial work of setting up the system for New Mexico and developing a pilot plan that turned out to be a bigger job than she bargained for. But the system is working now, and we hope that many of you received the initial message sent out on November 9th.

The Capwiz database includes only NM residents who have email addresses on file in the national League's database or who have individually responded to a Capwiz message that they received in some other way. We were able to

(Continued on page 11)

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

Transportation: Contact your local League if you can drive or if you need a ride. Parking is hard to find during the session, although a new parking garage is now open west of the Round House. The state does operate a shuttle from various locations. That information and information about other transportation alternatives can be found at: <http://nmshtd.state.nm.us/main.asp?secid=14635>

Lunch: Will be on your own. There is a cafeteria in the State House and many restaurants in the area.

Agenda

- 8:00 a.m. Registration & Coffee
8:30 a.m. Orientation - Review of League supported legislation
9:00 a.m. Better Choices for New Mexico (See article p. 4)
Stephanie Maez Gilbson, Coordinator, Better Choices for NM
9:30 a.m. Ethics Commission and Election Reform
Steve Robert Allen, Executive Director, Common Cause, NM
11:00 a.m. Rally - Better choices for New Mexico, Rotunda of the State House
Legislators and others will address the need for new revenue sources
to fund essential government services
Noon - 5:00 p.m. Attend Committee Hearings and visit your legislators

NOTE: During this period, the Legislature will pass a Memorial recognizing the 90th Birthday of the LWVUS.

The LWVNM Action Committee will be sending out email Action Alerts throughout the 2010 legislative session. If you are not part of the LWVNM Topics List, please go to www.lwvnm.org and sign up.

Board Meeting Highlights -

Jennice Fishburn, Secretary

The LWVNM Board met November 14, 2009, at New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, Socorro. Actions included:

- Reviewing the report of the newly formed Finance Committee and passing motions to separate the reserve fund from any carry-over/surplus budget amounts from the previous year by creating a reserve fund as well as an "opportunity" fund for any surplus over the established reserve amount.
- Passing a resolution supporting the efforts of the League of Women Voters of Colorado and its local Leagues in La Plata and Montezuma Counties to promote the establishment of a senior-level Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) coordinator based in the Four Corners area who would report directly to the USEPA in Washington, D.C.

- Authorizing President Kathy Campbell to write a letter from the LWVNM to LWVUS asking that the Fair Election Now Act be a priority in 2010.

The Board also heard committee and local League reports; discussed League Day plans as well as the LWVUS Public Advocacy for Voter Protection (PAVP) grant; scheduled an orientation to the Capwiz system for the next Board meeting; gave input on the draft LWVNM 2009-2011 strategic plan; filled the 2010 *Voters' Guide* position with co-editors, Jennice Fishburn and Lora Lucero; and asked the Natural Resources chair, Lora Lucero, to review the current position, which dates back to 1987, and to recommend areas that need updating.

The next LWVNM Board meeting will be January 9, 2010, in Albuquerque.

LWVNM Joins the Better Choices for New Mexico Campaign

Dick Mason, Co-Chair, Legislative Action Committee

In 1971, after extensive study, the League of Women Voters of New Mexico (LWVNM) adopted a clear position on state finances and the role of taxation. That position has been reviewed and updated over the years. Key elements in the LWVNM position are that a fair tax must be: equitable, taking into consideration relevant differences between persons, such as their annual income; adequate to finance the essentials of government; and should be progressive. Furthermore, tax credits and/or deductions should be evaluated based on promotion of equity and the efficiency with which they achieve their purpose. (For the full position go to: www.lwvnm.org.)

Given New Mexico's low status in per pupil expenditures and in the percentage of individuals without health insurance, the LWVNM definitely does not believe that the revenues in New Mexico are "adequate to finance the essentials of government". For that reason, in September of 2009, the LWVNM joined the Better Choices for New Mexico (BCNM) campaign. BCNM is a coalition of over 40, and growing, labor, advocacy, educational, human services, public safety, judicial and correctional organizations that have joined to advocate for the state to look at new revenue sources.

Some of the key revenue generators that should be considered are:

- **Roll back the cut in capital gains taxes.** Enacted in 2003, the capital gains tax cut slashed in half the amount paid on this unearned income. Most of this tax cut (76 percent) went to New Mexicans earning more than \$200,000 annually. This would generate **\$51 million annually**;
- **Roll back personal income tax cuts for the highest income group.** Also enacted in 2003, the state's personal income tax cut benefitted primarily higher-income filers. Could generate as much as **\$450 million annually** (LWVNM supported legislation in the 2009 session that would have rescinded the tax cut);
- **Close the personal income tax loophole for high-income filers.** This would require filers who itemize (typically higher income earners) to add-back on their state form the federal deduction they received for state and local taxes paid. New Mexico is one of only a

handful of states that still allows this deduction. This would generate **\$75 million annually**; and

- **Require a Tax Expenditure Report.** Tax expenditures are exemptions and deductions, most of which benefit small groups, that have been made to the state tax code. Over the years they add up, but the accumulated cost is not scrutinized during the annual budgeting process the way direct spending is. A tax expenditure report would allow lawmakers to make better budgeting decisions. Tax expenditures **cost New Mexico \$5 billion** every year—almost as much as the entire budget. New Mexico is one of just nine states without a tax expenditure report.

Starting in the 1970s, the anti-tax/anti-government movement has spread throughout the United States and has led to a disinvestment in services and infrastructure. I used to be a corporate planner and what has happened to our country over the last 30 years reminds me of the strategy of "corporate raiders." Corporate raiders would take over a company that had a reputation for quality and that had invested in research, plant, equipment, and personnel. These raiders would minimize spending on these investments knowing the effects of that lack of investment would not show up until years later. They would show a quick return to themselves and their investors, but years down the road, after they had sucked the life out of the company, they would leave only a shell of a former great company. We need to get back to investing in the services and infrastructure that have made this country great.

Advocates have to educate the public about what they get for their tax dollars. In November of 2009, there were anti-tax referenda on the ballot in Maine and Washington state. Both started out with the public very much in support. But, advocates joined together, including the League in Washington, and ended up defeating each by a comfortable margin in each state. The LWVNM plans to work with Better Choices for New Mexico to do that type of education in New Mexico.

For more information on the Better Choices for New Mexico campaign, you can go to its web site at: <http://betterchoicesnewmexico.com>

Getting out the Word About Census 2010

Cheryl Haaker, Chair



The study group has been coordinating with the census committees from the Central New Mexico and Santa Fe County Leagues. There has been a census article in each issue of the local *Voters* and *La Palabra*.

Committee members have attended Complete Count Committee meetings.

At the invitation of the study group, Mr. Brian Sanderoff, president, Research & Polling, spoke at the LWVCNM December general meeting. He and his company have been involved in New Mexico's redistricting activities in 1980, 1990, 2000, and expect to be in 2010 also.

Mr. Sanderoff described the census and who is counted. Many in the audience were surprised that college students and prisoners were counted as residents at the location of the institution they were attending, even though their homes and voting precincts were elsewhere, often in another state. He discussed projected changes in the apportionment of seats in Congress based on population changes. He outlined New Mexico's redistricting laws and how they have evolved, and presented a map showing population changes by county since 2000. Sanderoff went over the federal requirements for redistricting, stressing the importance of preserving communities of interest. He contrasted these goals and criteria with the way redistricting has been done in New Mexico: too often, as an incumbent protection plan in which both parties help one another to



Brian Sanderoff, Jo Porter, Dee Watkins, Judith Binder, Cheryl Haaker, Lisa Franzen, and Dee Trester

define "safe" districts. Sanderoff encouraged the League to educate the public about redistricting and its impact on their lives so that more people will attend the public meetings in 2011 and tell the legislators what is important to them.

Mr. Sanderoff's PowerPoint presentation is posted on the LWVCNM website: lwvcnm.org/fair/rp.

The Fair Representation Study Group needs volunteers to help spread the word about the census. If you can distribute flyers, talk to your neighborhood, church, or professional group, record a public service announcement, attend and report on a Complete Count Committee meeting, or you have ideas not mentioned here, contact Cheryl Haaker by phone (505-298-7415) or email (Cheryl@haaker.org). Remember, "***It's in Our Hands.***"

Census Trivia

The first census of the United States was conducted in 1790 by the Department of State, headed by Thomas Jefferson.

Sixteen States were surveyed:

Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Plymouth Plantations (one state, and rather small at that), Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

There were 3,929,326 persons enumerated, of which 697,681 were slaves. As prescribed by the Constitution, Indians were not counted, because at that time they were not eligible to vote.

Bonus Question: Had Native Americans been granted the right-to-vote from the beginning of the United States, how might our history have been different?

A: No answer provided. You fill in the narrative.



IT'S IN OUR HANDS

HEALTH CARE REFORM, December 10, 2009 - Vicki Simons, Chair, Health Care

Congress continue to keep us guessing about a final health care reform bill. As *La Palabra* goes to press, debate continues, and by the time you receive this issue, the final bill may be entirely different than what is reported here. This is what we know now.

The House of Representatives passed HR 3962 in early November, and the Senate has produced its bill, HR 3590, which is now being debated and amended before a final vote is taken in the Senate. Both bills include the following:

- An individual mandate requiring most individuals to have health insurance. Both bills impose penalties on those who do not comply.
- Provide premium credits (subsidies) to low-income individuals and families to buy health care insurance. Both bills would offer differing amounts of subsidies for individuals who earn up to 400% of FPL (federal poverty level).
- Creation of a Health Insurance Exchange, a one-stop marketplace where people can choose from various insurance plans. The details aren't clear but initially the Exchange would likely be open to self-employed, people without insurance at work and small businesses.
- Requirement that employers offer coverage to their employees. House and Senate bills differ greatly in amount employers would be required to cover and penalties imposed for not offering coverage.
- Impose reforms on insurance plans. Both outlaw discrimination based on pre-existing

conditions, won't allow companies to charge women higher premiums than men, eliminate coverage and place limits on how much people have to pay for health care beyond their premiums. They both cap out-of-pocket expenses and ban insurance companies from setting limits on how much health care they'll cover in each year.

There are remaining deficiencies in both bills. They leave millions of people uninsured; the House bill leaves 18 million and the Senate bill 24 million, so neither comes close to universal coverage. The Senate bill has no public option. The reforms do not start quickly enough; the larger structural changes are not scheduled to go into effect until 2013 (House) or 2014 (Senate). Required insurance could still be too expensive for many. There are no proposed limits on premium costs, the cause of many not being able to afford coverage now. Reproductive rights are severely restricted in the House bill; the bill prohibits anyone from purchasing insurance through the exchange from buying a policy that covers abortion. A less restrictive clause appears in the Senate bill..

The League of Women Voters supports a strong public option so that there is competition for the insurance companies. It is difficult to see how else premium costs will be controlled. While proponents of health care reform agree that neither bill is comprehensive enough, passing some legislation now opens the door for further reform in coming years.

Governor's Commission on Tax Policy - Bonnie Burn

Governor Richardson convened a 42-member commission to discuss and give feedback on various options for increasing state revenue. A web site, www.nmrevenueoptions.com, is available and gives complete information. Committee members do not vote in favor or against any of the options. Public comment is welcomed and is recorded.

Five meetings were held: November 16 (Santa Fe); November 19 (Albuquerque); December 1 (Las Cruces), December 10 (Farmington), and December 17 (Santa Fe) for wrap-up of committee work. Tax policy affecting residents, corporations, "sin taxes," and mineral taxes were on the table. With each topic, options for increasing revenue were presented and discussed. A public comment period was available at the end of each session. As we go to press, minutes for the last two meetings and a final report have not yet been posted, but may be available by the time you receive this issue.

(Continued on page 10)

Global Climate Change - Lora Lucero, director Natural Resources

This train has left the station and 2010 will be the year we learn which track it has taken. **Track #1 - Status quo and failure to reach firm targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.** On the horizon we see catastrophic threats to our environment, our health and our economy. **Track #2 - Some good intentions and many compromises among leaders abroad and here at home.** On the horizon we see a tipping point quickly approaching beyond which our grandchildren's planet will be imperiled. **Track #3 - A global mind shift occurs, our leaders make serious commitments to reduce CO₂ to 350 ppm.** On the horizon we see new green jobs and a sustainable future.

In December, the LWVUS sent a delegation of eight members to Copenhagen to urge world leaders to cap emissions at 25 % below 1990 levels by 2020. At press time, we don't know if our leaders listened. In November, the LWVNM joined twelve statewide groups to petition the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Board (EIB) to reduce emissions to the same levels. The petitioners also seek stronger rules for air quality permits issued to polluting industry. On Monday, January 11, 2010, the EIB will hold a public hearing in Santa Fe on the merits of the petition. The LWVNM and others will provide testimony. We hope many League members will attend and show support. PNM (Resources Subsidiary of Public Services Company of NM) and many industry representatives will be urging the EIB to retain the status quo.

Finally, on December 10, Senators Kerry, Lieberman and Graham sent a letter to President Obama about their efforts to "develop consensus on a comprehensive pollution reduction and energy independence plan." Their framework for legislation includes a reduction target in the range of 17 % below 2005 levels in the short-term and 80 % below 2005 levels in the long-term. They want a market-

based, cap and trade system. Their legislation will include provisions for "clean nuclear power" and encourage the construction of new nuclear power plants by "improving the speed of the licensing process." They also will "commit significant resources to the rapid development and deployment of clean coal technology." Clearly, these three consensus leaders are on Track #2.

Cap and trade is a complicated subject, but it all boils down to this: industry must have a limit on

the amount of greenhouse gas that it can emit and be required to purchase a carbon pollution permit for every ton of CO₂ it releases into the atmosphere. These permits will set an enforceable limit, or cap, which over time will become stricter, allowing less and less pollution until the ultimate reduction goal is met. The marketplace will determine the cost of buying and selling ("trading") these carbon pollution permits. Should there be "free permits" handed out to industry or

should 100% of the permits be competitively auctioned? The Office of the Management of Budgets (OMB) Director asserts that "free permits" would represent the largest corporate welfare program ever enacted in the United States. Some advocate for a "cap auction and dividend" system where the proceeds from the auction would be returned to Americans in the form of a dividend each year. (See www.newenergyeconomy.org).

Climate change negotiations are a moving target. Please check the LWVNM website for regular updates on this issue. If you can attend the EIB hearing in Santa Fe, please contact Lora Lucero at [LoraLucero\(AT\)aol.com](mailto:LoraLucero(AT)aol.com) or 505-247-0844. Together, we can make sure this train is going down the right track.



Water Study Report – Barbara Calef, chair, LWVNM Water Study

The final meeting of the Interim Legislative Committee on Water and Natural Resources took place over three days during the week of November 30. There were several very interesting presentations. Summaries of two of them follow.

Outstanding Waters

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and Department of Game and Fish are currently developing a request to designate the waters within the U.S. Forest Service wilderness areas, some 800-1,000 miles of headwaters and upper watershed streams, as Outstanding Natural Resource Waters (ONRW). That is the highest level of protection available under the state's water quality standards and the federal Clean Water Act. It is extended only to waters with high quality ecological or recreational characteristics. Streams given that designation may not be degraded in any way from the levels at the time of designation. The major cities along the Rio Grande-- Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Las Cruces, and Espanola-- support the proposal. So far, 21 hearings have been held around the state. A final hearing will take place in April before the Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC). State residents are welcome to write to Environment Secretary Ron Curry, chair of the Commission, as well as to attend the hearing.

Pre-existing land use activities allowed by federal or state law prior to designation are not prohibited so long as they do not result in new or increased discharges after designation. They must be controlled by best management practices. Grazing permits may be transferred or renewed without delay as long as there are no new or increased discharges associated with the activity. Two areas in New Mexico have already been designated: the waters within the U.S. Forest Service Valle Vidal Special Management Unit (2006) and the west, middle, and east forks of the Rio Santa Barbara within the Pecos Wilderness (2005).

In 2008, Governor Richardson petitioned the WQCC to give the ONRW designation to the waters in all the inventoried roadless areas of the state, some 5,000 miles of streams. Most federal roadless areas in the state are not classified as wilderness, although some are Wilderness Study Areas. There was

vociferous opposition from cattlemen, who fear a subsequent restriction of grazing rights. In response to the objection, and to the news that the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of Agriculture have suspended development in roadless areas, the NMED has significantly curtailed the proposal, which is now limited to wilderness areas.

Conservation?

In 2007, the Legislature passed SB461, known as the Ryan Bill, to provide incentives for irrigators to conserve water. When the expected water savings were not realized, the Legislature passed HJM 1, asking NMSU to report the results of research on water conservation methods that reduce consumptive use. Dr. Phillip King reported on studies in return flow efficiency in central and southern New Mexico. He and his colleagues found that the implementation of water conservation measures such as drip irrigation increases the consumptive use of water by crops. This means that a greater percentage of the water is delivered to the plants, resulting in a larger harvest. It also means that less water is returned to the river for users downstream. Dr. Rhonda Skaggs reported that traditional methods of irrigation result in crops receiving too much water at times and too little at other times. By scheduling irrigation to satisfy the crop's needs, farmers were able to produce significantly increased yields and improved quality. However, the increase in consumptive use means that less water will flow downstream. In other words, both professors concluded, there are no magic bullets.

High quality water is more than the dream of the conservationists; more than a political slogan; high quality water, in the right quantity at the right place at the right time is essential to health, recreation and economic growth.

*Edmund S. Muskie 1966
U.S. Senate Speech*

Local League News from the Presidents

Central New Mexico - *Jan and Olin Bray*

LWVCNM continues to be active on many fronts. The Drug Policy Study Committee sponsored a seminar on "Taking Responsibility for Your Pain" with professionals and an action plan development tool. There were about 50 attendees. The committee also sent a member to the International Drug Policy Symposium in Albuquerque. We are starting a leadership development group and will propose it as a study group at program planning in December. In Albuquerque we are observing the Climate Change Coalition and our Sandoval County members are observing their county commission, especially its long range planning work. We are contacting the Albuquerque Public Schools Superintendent and the school board to help with the census in the schools. We are sponsoring a lobbying workshop on December 5. We are having a reception for the new Albuquerque mayor and the Albuquerque City Council and Bernalillo County Commission on December 6.

Greater Las Cruces - *Bonnie Burn*

Our Lunch with a Leader in September focused on algae bio fuel, a new technology that seeks to develop a transportation fuel. A California-based company, Sapphire Energy, is developing a research facility on 22 acres of land in the West Mesa Industrial Park, Las Cruces.

The City of Las Cruces held a municipal election for city councilors in three districts that were contested, and for one municipal judge, who ran unopposed. The League held a Candidates' Forum on October 13 and published a two-page *Voters' Guide* in *The Las Cruces Bulletin*, October 16 issue.

An orientation for new members was held on October 17.

The Study Group on the Needed Resources and Services for the Mentally Ill in Doña Ana County has completed its study and presented its finding at a unit meeting on November 9. Concurrence was reached on a position.

A Legislative Breakfast on December 5 was our annual opportunity to listen to the legislative priorities of our representatives and senators and to let them about ours. It was well attended and there was frank conversation about the state budgetary challenges.

We supported funding for renovations at the Branigan Library located in Las Cruces. Renovations are underway for expansion of the building, and funding was threatened during the special legislative session. The library also received a grant, \$240,309, from New Mexico State Library for books and software.

As of August 3rd, Doña Ana County has a new Elections Supervisor, Bob Bartlesmeyer, who has served as county clerk and in the elections bureaus in Missouri, Nebraska, Arizona, and Florida. He was appointed by Secretary of State Mary Herra to the Standards Board of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC), and both will serve on that Commission. Established by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), EAC develops guidance to meet HAVA requirements.

Our web site is back on line, www.lwvglc.org.

Los Alamos - *Barbara Calef*

In November, our Lunch with a Leader speaker was Gene Schmidt, the new superintendent of schools. As well as giving an account of his vision for the schools, he commented on the work of the League as taking the "leadership role that generates voter interest on local and national issues" and contributed to an 84% voter turnout in Los Alamos in the 2008 election. Because an informed electorate is crucial to a democracy, Schmidt supports the League's hosting candidate forums, referendum and bond information meetings, and training future voters by visiting students in classrooms and exemplifying the importance of civil discourse.

Craig Martin was the Lunch with a Leader speaker in November. Martin, Los Alamos County's Open Space Manager, reported on the recovery from the May, 2000 Cerro Grande Fire, which burned over 43,000 acres in the Jemez Mountains. Using a variety of treatments, the

Forest Service and county staff worked to mitigate the damage. Hundreds of local volunteers helped them to rake, mulch, and re-seed the burned areas. Dead trees were cut and straw wattles were placed in drainages to reduce erosion. 124,000 ponderosas were planted. When lack of rain threatened the newly planted trees, residents and staff carried water to keep them alive.

Nine years after the fire, Craig and the other leaders can draw some conclusions about the best methods for treating severely burned areas. For instance, they learned that raking the hydrophobic soil was not necessary. It was sufficient for soil recovery and retention just to mulch. Involving members of the public in the recovery program helped community spirit, and youth programs trained a new generation of environmentalists. Today, 125 species of plants are growing in the burned area. 40,000 of the planted trees survive. Elk and deer are thriving again and small mammals have returned as well. The leaders in the recovery program have traveled to other communities damaged by wildfire to give guidance based on their experience in the Jemez.

Santa Fe County - *Meredith Machen*

The Santa Fe League is gaining increasing visibility, and local governments and public entities are including the League in its processes.

Santa Fe County: Related to LWVSFC's Transparency Report, members have been weighing in on the Sustainable Land Use Plan and Code Plan. League members submitted feedback related to our local positions and public input

processes. The county is revising the plan in response. The county has stopped holding meetings without adequate public notice, and it has passed a Transparency Resolution, which, while incomplete, is a major step toward openness and accountability. The League urged officials to provide more information before their recent Fire Excise Tax Election, which ultimately failed because of the small turnout. The public learned too little too late about the need for the funds.

Santa Fe Community College (SFCC) Higher Learning Center (HLC) Bond Issue: A League subcommittee has diligently studied the processes used by SFCC and the NM Higher Education Department in their attempt to establish the first Higher Learning Center in the state. The bond election has been postponed until August 3 because of the challenging economic times. If it passes, the HLC will provide a venue for all of the public universities to offer bachelor's and graduate programs in Santa Fe, which has only a handful of upper division courses offered through UNM and Highlands now. The subcommittee will delay the publication and dissemination of the pros and cons until closer to the election when the economy is expected to improve.

Affordable Housing: The City Councilor and County Commissioner working to align their respective policies, approaches, and programs dealing with affordable housing are League members. A community forum on this complicated issue is being planned for this spring, and the League is a stakeholder.

An Immigration Panel is being planned for February.

Governor's Commission on Tax Policy *(Continued from page 6)*

Gayle Prinkley, LWVCNM, and I, LWVGLC, were able to attend the meetings in our local areas, Albuquerque and Las Cruces, respectively. Major topics at the Albuquerque meeting were the gross receipts tax, the motor vehicle excise tax, and insurance premiums. At the Las Cruces meeting, corporate taxes were the topic. At each, a PowerPoint presentation was made to members and the audience, and agendas were distributed to all. Pro's and con's for each option were discussed. During public comment, the League's position on state finance was presented.

Another good report on state budget and taxes is "Who Pays? A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All 50 States," available from the Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy (November 2009) at www.itepnet.org/who_pays.html (or you can just get the NM-specific fact sheet, but the introductory material in the full report is useful).

LWVUS Sets Legislative Priorities - *Carolie Mullan, LWVUS Liaison*

Program is a three part process – studies, consensus for positions, and action. This process, over the years, has resulted in many positions on a wide variety of issues at the local, state, and national League levels. Leagues, at all levels, use various processes to establish priorities among LWV positions as a basis for taking action.

As a grassroots organization, the LWVUS Board solicits advocacy priority suggestions from members for action at the national level. A request for suggested advocacy priorities for the upcoming 2010 congressional session will be publicized in the Leader's Weekly Update beginning in December.

The LWVUS Advocacy Committee will evaluate the suggestions using a number of criteria such as member support, timeliness, opportunities for success, visibility, and whether there are adequate resources. The Advocacy Committee will then make legislative priority recommendations to the LWVUS Board for approval at their late January meeting (the beginning of the new congressional session).

By definition, a priority list should be short, but it is

also important to consider a variety of issues in order to ensure flexibility as circumstances change during the session. For instance, in recent years, the LWVUS Board has adopted a three-tier legislative priority list. Major action is focused on the Tier 1 issue list, although some effort will be spent on Tier 2 and 3 issues as opportunity arises. If a bill on an issue in one of the lower tiers looks promising and does not interfere with a top priority issue, action can be shifted.

Action includes things such as personal contact with key members of Congress, letters, press releases, and email Action Alerts sent to members. Advocacy staff, in frequent contact with members of congress, are assisted by the LWVUS Lobby Corps, which is made up of League members in the Washington D.C. area. The Lobby Corps members volunteer their time and expertise to visit Members of Congress on a monthly basis.

Many state and some local Leagues use similar processes to determine local and state legislative priorities in order to maximize their resources.

Capwiz *(Continued from page 2)*

send the initial message to only 317 of our 712 active NM members because only that number had email addresses on file. This represents about 75% of the members of the Los Alamos, Santa Fe, and Las Cruces Leagues, but only 17% of the Central New Mexico League, which does not routinely submit its members' email addresses to the national database. If you would like to be included on the Capwiz distribution list, please update your email at <https://member.lwv.org/login.asp> or ask your membership chair to do it for you. Note that you have complete control over the League's use of your email address. You'll receive messages only if you opt in, and you can opt out at any time. All Capwiz messages have an "unsubscribe" option at the bottom of the message.

LWVNM realizes that it now has at least three electronic methods for communicating with members: two Yahoogroup lists (LWVNMTopics and LWVNMAction) as well as Capwiz. At our January Board meeting, we will be making policy on the use of these tools, including possibly dropping one of them. We also will be working on integrating Capwiz with our website at www.lwvnm.org. Please give any suggestion to your local president or any board member.

We hope that Capwiz will help to generate a greater sense of community among New Mexico League members and increase the number of members taking action on critical issues.

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VOL. 57 No. 3 Winter 2010

Inside this Issue

League Day at the Legislature	1
President's Message	2
Capwiz	2
Board Meeting Highlights	3
Better Choices Coalition	4
Census 2010	5
Health Care Reform	6
Commission on Tax Policy	6
Global Climate Change	7
Water Study	8
Local News - Presidents	9-10
LWVUS Liaison Report	11
Calendar	12

LWVNM BOARD CALENDAR - 2009-2010

January 9, 2010 Board Meeting, Albuquerque
9:45 - 2:45 p.m. - Manzano Mesa Center
501 Elizabeth SE, Albuquerque

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

LEAGUE DAY

**LEAGUE DAY
AT THE
LEGISLATURE**

**LEAGUE DAY
AT THE
LEGISLATURE
JANUARY 26, 2010**

**LEAGUE DAY
AT THE
LEGISLATURE**

LEAGUE DAY