



# La Palabra

The newsletter of the League of Women Voters of New Mexico

VOL. 58 No. 3 WINTER 2011

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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

*Tuesday, February 1, 2011, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.*  
*First Christian Church - 645 Webber Street, Santa Fe*

**Directions: From Round House on Old Santa Fe Trail, turn right onto Paseo de Peralta, then take first left onto Webber Street. Walk approximately three blocks to the church**

The sixty day 2011 Legislative Session begins on January 18 and ends on March 19. This session is held every two years and is the major policy making session of the New Mexico Legislature. With a new Governor, we are not sure of all the issues that will be on the table in this session, but the legislators will be dealing with many bills that have been identified as priority issues for the League of Women Voters of New Mexico (LWVNM). Some issues that we know will be coming up are: budget shortfall; implementing federal health care reform; and deciding on the process for redistricting. Governor Susana Martinez campaigned on ethics reform and on efficiency in government, so those may be on the legislative agenda. As in the 2010 session, LWVNM will be supporting legislation that creates new revenue sources such as rescinding the 2003 tax cuts. Without new revenue sources, a wide range of public programs and services will be cut.

**We need your voice to make a difference on these issues.  
Please plan to attend.**

### Agenda

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| 8 a.m. onwards      | Pick up packets of information in the Office of Representative Gail Chasey (Room 314)                  |
| 8:30 - 10:30 a.m.   | Attend Committee Hearings<br>(Schedule is in packet of information)                                    |
| 10:30 a.m.          | Walk to First Christian Church for Speakers and Lunch (Map is in packet of information)                |
| 10:45 - 11:30 a.m.  | "Implementing Federal Health Care Reform"<br>Sireesha Manne, Center on Law and Poverty                 |
| 11:30 a.m.          | Lunch (Details on p. 2)  |
| 11:45 a.m. - 1 p.m. | "Budget Issues in the Session"<br>Nick Estes, Deputy Policy Director,<br>New Mexico Voice for Children |
| 1 - 5 p.m.          | Attend Committee Hearings or House & Senate Session and visit with your legislators                    |

(Continued on page 2)

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE - League for a New Decade

This is the time of year, in the run-up to the state convention, when we look forward to what we wish to accomplish in the next couple of years, or perhaps even longer. Our local Leagues engage in program planning, that hopefully includes consideration of state program. (See article LWVNM Program and Prioritization, p. 3.) And our state nominating committee, chaired by Rebecca Shankland, identifies people to lead LWVNM for the next two years. (See Call for Nominations, p. 3.)

During the three and a half years that I have been president of LWVNM, the board has regularly devoted part of its time to strategic planning, an effort led by Vice President Linda Moscarella. We have outlined three important goals, seven objectives, and innumerable supporting activities. Execution, however, has been more hit-or-miss. Perhaps this is the fate of many strategic planning exercises, but also there are structural problems with the board as constituted that make it harder for the state League to meet all of its goals. We are attempting to remedy this with a new set of portfolios for the state board (available at [www.lwvnm.org/board.html](http://www.lwvnm.org/board.html)).

Nevertheless, we have a League that has taken on some of the most vital issues in New Mexico over the past few years. Our new position on redistricting positions us to play an important role in increasing the transparency of this arcane process

in New Mexico in 2011. Under the energetic guidance of Natural Resources Director Lora Lucero, LWVNM is a leader in addressing climate change in New Mexico. And, of course, we have continued to live up to our commitment to democracy and public participation in government and to promote civil discourse and issues-based campaigning in the face of unfortunate judicial decisions allowing ever more money to influence our elections, through our advocacy and *Voters Guides*.

To keep the League moving forward as we begin the second decade of the 21st century, we need more of our members to become active at the state level. There are many ways to help, only some of which require being a member of the board of directors. So when the nominating committee contacts you and asks you if you will help LWVNM remain a vital institution in New Mexico, I hope you'll say YES.

And be sure to come to League Day at the Legislature on February 1, one of the few statewide events sponsored by LWVNM, an opportunity to meet members from other Leagues as well as to learn about the issues facing the Legislature in 2011.

*Kathy Campbell, President*

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

**Accommodations:** **Garrett's Desert Inn**, 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 for parking if you check out the morning of League Day. Call 1-800-888-2145 to make a reservation.

**Lunch:** Will be held at the First Christian Church, 645 Webber St., Santa Fe. Lunch will be a sandwich, chips, cookie, and soft drink. Sandwich options are chicken, ham, or vegetarian for \$10, payable on that day. To order lunch contact Dick Mason, at [lwvnmaction@gmail.com](mailto:lwvnmaction@gmail.com) or call the League office at (505) 884-8441 by Friday, January 29th. You may bring your own lunch.

**Transportation:** Contact your local League if you can drive or if you need a ride. Parking near the State House is hard to find during the session. The state does operate a shuttle from various locations. Information about transportation is available at: <http://nmshtd.state.nm.us/main.asp?secid=14635>.

**Parking:** There are a limited number of free parking spaces available at First Christian Church, 645 Webber St. in Santa where we will be meeting for speakers and lunch. There is paid parking (\$8 maximum) on Galisteo Street (a left turn off of Paseo de Peralta just east of Cerrillos Road).

# First Call to State Convention 2011

## May 14-15, 2011 Los Alamos, New Mexico

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### First Call - *Kathy Campbell, President*

The 2011 Convention of the League of Women Voters of New Mexico will be held May 14 and 15 in Los Alamos, New Mexico. The Convention will adopt a program, elect a board of directors, and adopt a budget for the next two years.

Each League is entitled to a number of delegates proportional to its membership (details can be found in the LWVNM bylaws available at [www.lwvnm.org/bylaws.html](http://www.lwvnm.org/bylaws.html).) In addition, all board members, except the local League presidents, are automatically delegates. Finally, there is a slot for one delegate to represent LWVNM's members-at-large. Additional observers are always welcome.

Business meetings will be held in the mornings of the two-day meeting. There will be a reception for those arriving Friday evening. Saturday afternoon will feature at least one workshop, local sightseeing, and a banquet at which Senator Tim Keller of Albuquerque will speak about "Building Healthy Communities."

Mark the date on your calendar! Complete details will be published in the spring issue of *La Palabra*.

### Call for Nominations - *Rebecca Shankland*

The past four years have seen a remarkable and gratifying increase in League of Women Voters of New Mexico visibility, efficiency, and effective lobbying. This increase has occurred because Kathy Campbell has led an outstanding board of directors as a team where the whole group accomplished much more than they could have managed individually. The Nominating Committee is determined to continue the momentum this team has created—but we need your help with both volunteering yourselves and suggesting other potential board members.

The Nominating Committee needs to fill ten board positions by election at the state Convention in May: four officers plus six directors. The presidents of the four local Leagues, elected of course by their own Leagues, are also *ex officio* members of the state board. Finally, under our

bylaws the state board may appoint additional directors, up to six, but in practice this seldom occurs.

"Off board directors" also contribute significantly to the state leadership of the League. So even if you feel that you cannot commit to attending board meetings in person, several important positions are open for which being on the board is not essential. While these positions are not filled by election, the Nominating Committee would like to identify members who are interested in them.

Most of the portfolios require some work throughout the year, but there are positions that require a lot of work for a short period of time such as the editors of the state *Voters' Guide* and *Voters' Key*.

Portfolio descriptions for the various positions are available at [www.lwvnm.org/board.html](http://www.lwvnm.org/board.html) or from Nominating Committee members. In most cases, the Nominating Committee also can put you in touch with the current occupant of any position so that you can learn first-hand what may be involved.

The members of the Nominating committee can be reached at [nominations\(AT\)lwvnm.org](mailto:nominations(AT)lwvnm.org). They are:

- Rebecca Shankland, LWVLA (505) 672-9106
- Johnnie Aldrich, LWVGLC
- Andrea Targhetta, LWVCNM
- Lora Lucero, LWVCNM
- Meredith Machen, LWVSFC

Please look over the positions that need to be filled and consider nominating yourself or recommending someone else to any member of the nominating committee.

### State Program and Prioritization – *Kathy Campbell*

League "Program" includes both position development and advocacy. Prioritization in both areas is member-driven, but for the League in New Mexico the process is different for position development and for advocacy.

(Continued on page 4)

## Call to Convention *(Continued from page 3)*

Position development is a slow process, which usually begins at our state Convention where the delegates may approve a study process to arrive at a new position or to update an existing position. In either case, proposals to be brought to Convention must be submitted to the state board's March meeting (March 19 in 2011.) The state Board will make a recommendation based on the answers to the questions:

- Are there people available to work on the issue?
- Is the problem one that can be addressed by governmental action?
- Is the issue one in which the League is likely to make a difference in the outcome?

Regardless of whether or not the state Board recommends a study, it will be brought before the

Convention delegates, but the rules for adopting it differ depending on the Board's recommendation. (See the Process for Conducting State Studies, available at [www.lwvnm.org/board.html](http://www.lwvnm.org/board.html).)

When it comes to prioritizing issues for advocacy, the process must be much more nimble. In December the Action Committee agrees on recommendations to the Board, which are adopted (or not) by the Board at its January meeting. But the criteria are similar to those in the questions above, especially the question of whether or not there are League members ready to work on the issue.

So bring your interests and your passions to the Action Committee and to Convention. The League has a wide range of interests but limited resources, and you can make a difference in determining how we will allocate those resources in the coming years.

January 7, 2011

**LWVNM ACTION  
COMMITTEE**  
will begin holding  
weekly teleconference  
calls.

To participate in the  
discussion and keep up  
with the latest  
legislative information,  
join the  
LWVNMAction  
Listserv

Go to the [lwvnm.org](http://lwvnm.org)  
and click on ACTION

Problems?

Contact: Dick Mason,  
Email: [polirich\(at\)aol.com](mailto:polirich(at)aol.com)

## LWVNM BOARD MEETING Highlights - Jennice Fishburn, Secretary

At its November 13, 2010, meeting in Socorro, the LWVNM Board:

- Adopted final revisions of LWVNM Financial Policies and Procedures and Electronic Meeting Procedures.
- Discussed options for electronic communication tools, deciding not to participate in LWVUS' "Salsa" and to continue investigating other communication tools including ways of reaching League members and state legislators who prefer not to use electronic communication.
- Decided to gather more information about the America Speaks deliberative democracy project and the Transportation for America coalition.
- In regard to a request by the LWV of Arizona to join them in advocating for a national popular vote, decided to follow the usual process of having the LWVNM Action Committee recommend action priorities for 2011.

Work will begin on the new edition of the *Voters' Key* at the end of the year. During the period of October 12-16, the *Voters' Guide* newspaper display ad appeared in the following outlying newspapers for one day only: *Farmington Daily Times*, *Gallup Independent*, *Silver City Daily Press and Independent*, *Socorro El Defensor-Chieftain*, *Roswell Daily Record*, and *Las Vegas Optic*. The Record and Optic also ran the ad for a week in their online editions. News releases about the *Voters' Guide* were mailed to New Mexico media.

## Working With Others

Kathy Campbell, President

The League of Women Voters seldom works alone on its advocacy priorities. Occasionally, we join in formal coalitions to support a range of legislative initiatives, and even more often we affiliate with other organizations in support of specific pieces of legislation.

The League has formal guidelines for joining coalitions (see [www.lwvnm.org/board.html](http://www.lwvnm.org/board.html)) that include the availability of a member to serve as a regular liaison between the coalition and the LWVNM Board and Action Committee. Under these guidelines, we have joined three state coalitions: Health Care for All, the Health Security for New Mexicans Campaign, and Better Choices New Mexico.

When we join coalitions, we reserve the right to opt out of any actions or advocacy by the coalition that we cannot support based on League positions. But because we lend our name to these coalitions, they are more formal alliances than the temporary working alliances we form with other groups. As an example of such an informal alliance, we often collaborate with Common Cause New Mexico on ethics and campaign finance reform issues. Last year we worked with Think New Mexico on its bill to ban campaign contributions from state contractors and lobbyists. We participate in meetings of the Election Administration Work Group organized by America Votes, that includes Common Cause, United Voters of New Mexico and other groups with whom we have worked in the past. And we have been working with Clean Energy Works (a national coalition that includes LWVUS) in New Mexico on climate change.

We continue to seek other coalitions with which we can work. However, a major barrier is the availability of League members willing and able to serve as liaisons with such groups. A smaller barrier may be the lack of well-defined guidelines in our own positions as they relate to some of the specific issues taken up by groups of interest. Both of these barriers could be addressed at the upcoming convention, the first by an expression of interest and offer to help from any League member, and the second by updating our positions in these areas to make them more effective tools for advocacy

## Climate Change Update

Lora Lucero, Director, Natural Resources

**10-10-10 Letter Writing Campaign:** In October, the League of Women Voters of New Mexico (LWVNM) presented more than one hundred letters to the two gubernatorial candidates, Diane Denish and Susanna Martinez, urging them to assume strong leadership to address the growing threat from climate change. The handwritten letters were the result of the League's participation in the 10-10-10 global work party that occurred in 188 countries on October 10 (see <http://www.350.org/>). League members expressed a strong sentiment that action to reduce carbon emissions in New Mexico must be taken quickly. Here are a few excerpts from those letters:

*"I am writing to urge you to support putting a price on carbon, which is the only way to send correct signals to the markets about the impacts of climate change. The market is in general too short-sighted to look beyond the next few quarters. Climate change is already upon us, but it will be a few more years (not decades) before it becomes clear to all that its effects will be extremely expensive, not only economically but also in terms of human misery. The southwestern part of the United States, including New Mexico, will be particularly hard hit."*

*"On the campaign trail, with the state's economy still in bad shape, you probably don't want to hear about that foolish luxury, the environment. But here's some good news: helping the environment can put New Mexicans to work, build up local businesses, and even establish New Mexico as a leader in green technologies!"*

*"I urge you to support [the proposed cap and trade program] if you are elected governor of New Mexico in November. New Mexico is a land of blue skies. It is up to us to keep them blue and to protect our environment in our interest and that of future generations. If the U.S. Congress and the federal government cannot act on carbon pollution, as they should, then the states must do so."*

(Continued on page 6)

## Climate Change *(Continued from page 5)*

*“Why should you support the petitions currently before the Environmental Improvement Board? Climate change is real, and our part in it no longer in doubt. The planet has seen the warmest six month and the warmest April, May and June on record. Who are we kidding? Oil is peaking, if not peaked, and coal is dirty, and not the wave of the future, no matter how you slice it.”*

*“It is time for New Mexico to step forward and become a regional leader in changing the destructive dynamic of climate change. Your position in support of these petitions will win support from voters like me who believe that now is the time to take the first steps.”*

*“Congress has proved that, because of partisan bickering, it is unable to act on important issues like climate change. We in the States need to lead the way on this issue and show the world that the citizens of this country are not afraid to step up to the plate and curb our appetite for energy sources that are toxic to the world’s environment. New Mexico needs to be a leader in this.”*

*“Though I would have preferred that the U.S. Congress pass national emission standards or a federal renewable electricity standard, such legislation is highly unlikely in the very divisive federal government we currently have. We must act now to forestall an environmental disaster in our beautiful and livable state.”*

*“Water availability in New Mexico is already a critical issue. Now with temperatures increasing...our current supply of water is threatened...”*

**Environmental Improvement Board:** On December 6, the Environmental Improvement Board approved the petition submitted by New Energy Economy to set a cap on greenhouse gas emissions in New Mexico. The LWVNM was a petitioner in that request.

## LWVNM Lobbying Workshop

*Barbara Calef, President, Los Alamos*

This year’s pre-legislative session lobbying workshop was held in Santa Fe and featured Democratic Senator Peter Wirth of Santa Fe, Republican Representative Jimmie Hall of Bernalillo, and professional lobbyist Erin Muffoletto.

The legislators explained the basics of lawmaking. The first step is for a member of either house to ask the non-partisan Legislative Council Service for assistance in researching and drafting a bill. The bill can be pre-filed as early as December 15. Speaker Ben Lujan assigns all bills introduced in the House of Representatives to two or more committees. The Senate operates a little differently. Michael Sanchez, the Democratic majority floor leader, permits members to request the committees for the bills they introduce. Any member can object to committee referrals and sometimes a vote is taken on the issue. The two legislators agreed that, in general, the House is more partisan and less deliberative than the Senate.

A bill must pass each committee in sequence. Then it must be passed in the chamber where it originated before it goes on to the other house, where the process is repeated. When the bill has passed both houses, it must be approved by concurrence if any change has been made. Finally, the Governor must sign the bill before it becomes law.

Senator Wirth’s primary message for lobbyists is to be strategic about the legislature. A person can spend a lot of time at the Round House without accomplishing a thing. That means that it is important to know how the system works and where to find the votes. Don’t waste time in front of a committee when there is no hope of passing or stopping a bill. Representative Hall recommended using New Mexico Votes (<http://www.newmexicovotes.org/>) to keep track of how each legislator votes on the issues. The site also tracks campaign contributions to the legislators.

Representative Hall advised prospective lobbyists to become familiar with the State

Constitution, and generally to know the facts. Hall emphasized the importance of socializing with your legislators before the session. Invite them to join you for coffee or breakfast. Get to know them so they will recognize your name when you contact them about legislation. New Mexico citizens are fortunate that they can see their legislators and even the Governor.

All of the speakers agreed that there is power in numbers. A legislator who has received messages from a large number of constituents regarding a piece of legislation will be influenced by their message. As Representative Hall said, "Boots on the ground!"

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## Outstanding National Resource Waters

*Barbara Calef, Chair, Water Study*

On November 30 the New Mexico Environment Department's Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) voted 7 to 3 to approve Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRW) designations for 700 miles of perennial rivers and streams, 29 lakes and about 4,930 acres of wetlands in wilderness areas of national forests in the state. The ONRW initiative will take effect on December 30. Land use activities already in existence will not be impacted as long as they are controlled by "best management practices". LWVNM wrote a letter to New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Director Ron Curry in support of the rule last winter and I spoke on behalf of the League during the WQCC hearing in September.

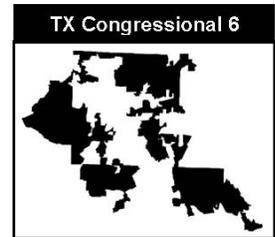
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## "Great" Moments in Redistricting

*From the Brennan Center: "Why Redistricting Matters" article: [http://www.brennancenter.org/content/pages/why\\_redistricting\\_matters1](http://www.brennancenter.org/content/pages/why_redistricting_matters1)*

**"Packing Partisans.** In 1991, Texas Democrats crammed loyal Texas Republican voters into a district that spanned hundreds of miles, taking small slivers of land from five counties. By **packing pockets of Republican voters** into districts like the one shown as TX Congressional 6, Democrats could give themselves a better chance in the districts next door. In 1992,

Republicans and Democrats each won about 49% of Texas' statewide vote ... but under the Democratic redistricting plan, Democrats won 70% of the state's congressional races."



*Note: this district is the one featured on the cover of the ACLU's "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Redistricting But Were Afraid to Ask" report. Yes, that's one (1) congressional district. It kind of puts Tom Delay's 2003 re-redistricting into perspective...*

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## Time To Redistrict!

*Cheryl Haaker, Chair Redistricting Study*

Whether we're ready or not, New Mexico is going to redistrict in 2011: its three (we think) congressional districts, 70 New Mexico House and 42 Senate districts, various county and municipal districts, and more.

New Mexico's own Mary Wilson, outgoing president of the League of Women Voters of the United States, is coordinating the national League's efforts to help state and local Leagues weigh in on redistricting and make a difference. They are preparing references, templates, educational materials, roadmaps, etc. to help our redistricting projects speak with a consistent voice, and will be sharing the experiences of League work done in other states.

The National material will emphasize the federal Voting Rights Act and League's "transparency" position, since its "apportionment" position is so generic. Fortunately, New Mexico has a more detailed state position on reapportionment and redistricting that will permit lobbying on specifics of the redistricting process and criteria.

Volunteers are needed to work at all levels and potentially all communities. Each League should consider setting up a Redistricting Committee. Wilson recommended these steps and activities:

- Become informed about redistricting in general and your geographic area(s) in particular.

*(Continued on page 8)*

## Time to Redistrict *(Continued from page 7)*

- Learn who's responsible for redistricting, what their process will/may be, have they already started?
- Work with partners, such as the ACLU, AARP, Common Cause, America Votes, United Voters of New Mexico, Verified Voting New Mexico, etc.
- Get media attention and don't assume that reporters will know much about redistricting. Be prepared to educate them.
- Provide material and talking points to legislators, to encourage them to improve the process.
- Inform the public about why redistricting is important to them and what they can do to protect/promote their interests. Let them know what may happen if they don't.
- Attend and, if possible, participate in redistricting groups. Report on their activities.
- When maps are released, evaluate and comment on them. Attend public hearings and get other members of the public to attend as well.

Some Leagues have offered alternative maps. They have obtained software for this purpose. Others have made user-friendly software available on their websites, so anyone can give it a try. Some Leagues have held contests for the "best" redistricting maps and presented them to their legislatures. Mary Wilson suggested going to the company with whom the Legislature has contracted and working with them to develop their maps, noting that she has done this herself.

Most of the real work will have to be done at the local League level. The state League will coordinate, posting resources and links on the web page ([lwvnm.org/redistrict](http://lwvnm.org/redistrict)), holding teleconferences, maintaining mailing lists, and passing along information from National.

### References:

LWV US Redistricting Resource Page: Go to [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org), and select the "Projects" item on the blue horizontal navigation bar. It will expand into a list of projects; select "Developing an

Action Agenda for Redistricting in 2011".

The Brennan Center: Redistricting 101, [http://www.brennancenter.org/content/pages/redistricting\\_for\\_advocates#Redistricting-In-A-Box](http://www.brennancenter.org/content/pages/redistricting_for_advocates#Redistricting-In-A-Box)

George Washington University's Redistricting Project, <http://elections.gwu.edu/Redistricting.html>

American Civil Liberties Union: Everything You've Always Wanted to Know About Redistricting, But Were Afraid To Ask, <http://www.aclu.org/voting-rights/everything-you-always-wanted-know-about-redistricting-were-afraid-ask>

America Votes Redistricting 2010, <http://www.americavotes.org/redistricting>

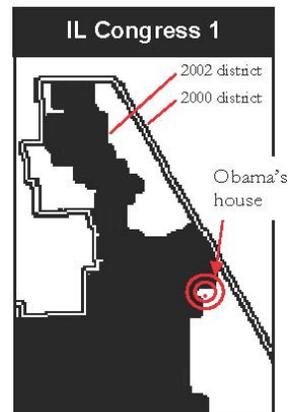
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## "Great" Moments in Redistricting

*From the Brennan Center: Why Redistricting Matters article: [http://www.brennancenter.org/content/pages/why\\_redistricting\\_matters1](http://www.brennancenter.org/content/pages/why_redistricting_matters1)*

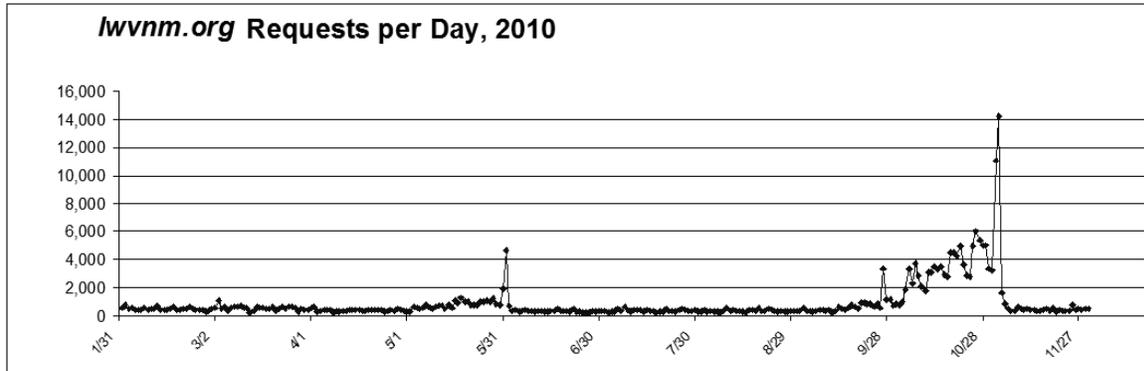
"In the 2000 primary for an Illinois congressional seat, state Senator Barack Obama threw together a hasty campaign against a sympathetic incumbent, and won more than 30% of the vote. Though Obama lost, his campaign set the stage for a stronger showing in a potential rematch.

When Illinois redrew its districts *[in 2002]*, the state legislators deferred to incumbent members of Congress, including the incumbent whom Obama challenged. When the redistricting was done, **the block around Obama's house was carved out of the district.** "



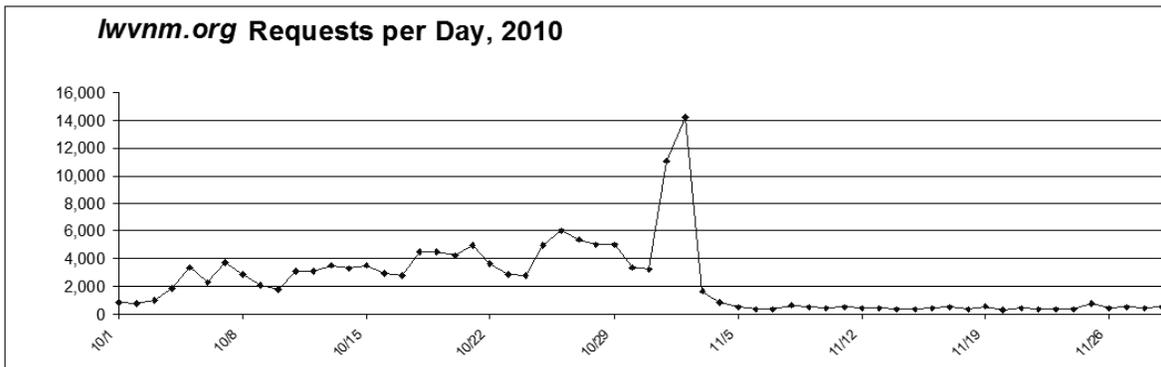
## **Voters' Guide Online: Did Anyone Care?** **Cheryl Haaker, Webmaster**

According to the website logs, **YES**. The graph of all 2010 page requests shows pronounced peaks for the June primary and even more for the November general election.



On Election Day, requests hit a yearly maximum of 14,234 in one day! (Normal is 400-500.)

Overall, in October and November 2010 (shown below), the *Voters' Guide* PDF was downloaded 5,000 times, which compares favorably with 5,500 downloads for LWVCNM's *Voters' Guide*. The web pages most often requested, in this order were: the home page, the *Voters' Guide*



During October, when usage was rapidly increasing, the non-*Voters' Guide* Positions and Contact pages were also accessed at a significantly higher rate than in November, after the election was over. This suggests that if we can continue to post content on the website that people want to see, they will visit and look at other things while they're there.

### **STAY INFORMED**

By visiting the League's web sites:  
 National - [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)  
 State - [www.lwvnm.org](http://www.lwvnm.org)  
 Local  
 Central New Mexico - [www.lwvcnm.org](http://www.lwvcnm.org)  
 Greater Las Cruces - [www.lwvglc.org](http://www.lwvglc.org)  
 Los Alamos - [www.losalamos.org](http://www.losalamos.org)  
 Santa Fe County - [www.lwvsfc.org](http://www.lwvsfc.org)

### **LEAGUE DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE**

Meet and greet your legislators  
**"CONTINUE THE DIALOGUE"**

**February 1, 2011**

(See p. 1 for details)

## LOCAL LEAGUE NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENTS

### **Greater Las Cruces** - *Bonnie Burn*

Election, election, election – voter services activities dominated the agenda for Las Cruces. Kudos to Erika Graf-Webster, director, and chairs, Tom Schmutz, Voter Registration, Nancy Phillips, Candidates Forums, and *Voters' Guide* editor, Dale Yeo. Thirty-six new 18 year olds were registered to vote. There were 44 individuals seeking elected office who participated in our candidates' forums. All had a chance to introduce themselves and answer questions from the audience that numbered 100. Recommendations to handle a group this large were developed after these two events.

Our *Voters' Guide* was again well received even though it was published after early voting had started. Kudos to Jennice Fishburn and the state *Voters' Guide* Committee who funneled accurate information to local Leagues and were helpful when questions arose. 20,000 copies of the *Guide* were distributed with the weekly newspaper, *Las Cruces Bulletin*. Additionally, 1,500 copies were distributed by League members throughout the City of Las Cruces and libraries in Hatch, Anthony, and Sunland Park (major municipalities in southern New Mexico). With the recently incorporated City of Anthony, we learned that there is a lot of interest about voter services activities in municipalities south of Las Cruces. We will be making plans to work with them during the 2012 General Election.

GLC was pleased to participate in the 10-10-10 letter campaign that brought climate change to the attention of Diane Denish and Susan Martinez, candidates seeking the Governorship of New Mexico. We await Governor-Elect Susan Martinez's direction in this area when she takes office after her inauguration in January 2011.

In anticipation of New Mexico's first woman governor, NMSU's KRWG TV interviewed Mary Tucker, former state representative and member of the Progress Club, Bonnie Eisenberg, women's historian and member of AAUW, and me about women as governors and in politics, and the negativity and flow of money into campaigns. Our views were aired on KRWG radio and TV and snippets were broadcast on YouTube.

Finally, the focus of interest among two community groups is immigration law reform. An Ad Hoc Immigration Committee was established in an effort to educate city councilors and county commissioners in preparation for any future governmental action. This effort has resulted in a public forum scheduled for mid-January. The Immigration/Migration Action Task Force continues its efforts started more than two years ago under the leadership of Ambassador Delano Lewis, dean, International & Border Programs, NMSU. After a successful summer institute in July, the Task Force is scheduled to develop future plans at its meeting in January.

### **Los Alamos** - *Barbara Calef*

It has been a busy fall in Los Alamos. The League held two candidate forums in October. The first was for candidates for Congress, the NM House of Representatives, and Magistrate Judge, and also to introduce the unopposed candidates to voters. The second forum was for the seven County Council candidates and the eleven proposed amendments to our County Charter.

Also in October Dick Mason, Chairman of the LWVNM Action Committee, spoke at Lunch with a Leader about the significance of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPCA), the most important social program since Medicare. We look forward to a repeat visit in January when Mason will explain the legislation necessary to implement the PPCA in New Mexico.

During another Lunch with a Leader program David Brooks, the Los Alamos Community Service Coordinator, explained how both adult and teen-age offenders can benefit themselves and Los Alamos by performing community service as an alternative to a fine and a police record.

Just as we were relaxing after the General Election, our County Council voted to hold a special election in response to a petition regarding the placement, design, and purpose of a new Municipal Building, despite the County Attorney's opinion that the petition requirements were overly prescriptive and therefore illegal. The Council scheduled the mail-in ballot election for December 20, and also voted not to allow county staff to

explain the issues to the public. The League decided that we had an obligation to provide pros and cons to the public, but given the short time before the ballots were to be mailed, it was going to be very expensive to accomplish. At that point, two local attorneys, both League members, brought suit against the county in district court on the basis that the planned election was illegal. The judge granted a temporary injunction, stopping the election until a hearing on the legality of the election can be held.

Last year the County Council created a Charter Review Committee (CRC) to consider how and whether the 42-year old County Charter needed to be changed. The League moderated a town hall meeting last winter for the CRC and in early December hosted a forum on the structure of government to educate the public about alternatives that might better serve our county.

James Svava, Professor of Public Affairs at Arizona State University and Director of the Center for Urban Innovation, explained the different approaches to government used in American cities and towns. Los Alamos currently has a council-manager form of government. Many residents feel that the county would be better managed with a mayor, but after Svava had discussed all the variables among mayoral systems, it was clear that further education and discussion are needed before any change is made.

The second speaker, Karen Walker, is a League member who participated in the creation of Santa Fe's city charter. Walker recommended that Los Alamos choose a businessman for mayor because entrepreneurs are "go-getters". Referring to two other concerns in Los Alamos, Walker also recommended against districting and that local elections be non-partisan. Currently all of the county councilors are at-large and elections are partisan. A straw poll taken at the end of the forum indicated great interest in a mayoral form of government, a preference for non-partisan elections, and interest in partial redistricting to assure representation for White Rock residents.

### **Santa Fe - Meredith Machen**

LWVSFC successfully advocated for Santa Fe county commissioners' approval of the Sustainable Growth Management Plan. The commissioners voted unanimously on an evening when the hall

was packed with vocal opponents as well as supporters. The League will continue to weigh in as the county works with the public to develop a strong ordinance to implement the plan. Using our positions, we will support implementation of a code that provides for efficient infrastructure, protects the environment, and works for the entire community. LWVSFC congratulated the county for having transparent processes over 18 months, including website modifications, email alerts, myriad public meetings and commission study sessions.

LWVSFC continues to work on strengthening ethics ordinances and enforcement in both City and county government. Ethics violations by elected officials are motivating citizens, including League members, to propose clear and specific ethics rules and sanctions that apply to both elected officials and staff.

League leaders are also insisting on transparency in capital outlay bond proposals and decision-making by public education entities. Long-range facilities master plans are frequently ignored when new priorities emerge resulting in voter anger and lack of confidence. Santa Fe's high cost of living combined with the impending budget cuts to education are causing us to re-examine our local and state education positions.

In response to the 2008 law allowing school board and higher education board elections to be combined, for which the League lobbied, Santa Fe Public Schools and Santa Fe Community College will be combining their elections on February 1, 2011. LWVSFC will conduct candidate forums and publish a Voter Guide for this joint election.

In addition to monitoring local governments, we are preparing for the tough challenges for the 2011 Legislature by attending various interim committee meetings, including the Government Restructuring Task Force, Legislative Finance, and the Legislative Education Study Committee.

All government—indeed, every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtues and every prudent act—is founded on compromise and barter.

*Edmund Burke*

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## STATE ON-BOARD AND OFF-BOARD POSITIONS

**Officers:** President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer

**Communication Committee:** Newsletter Editor, Webmaster, Public Relations Coordinator

**Program Chairs:** Elections Issues, Education, Health Care Reform, Natural Resources, Others, as interested

Advocacy Committee Chair  
Membership Chair  
Nominating Committee  
Voters Guide, Voters Key Editors  
Historian/Archivist

For details, write to [nominations\(at\)lwvnm.org](mailto:nominations(at)lwvnm.org)

## 2011 CALENDAR

**January 8** LWVNM Board Meeting,  
10 a.m. - 3 p.m., Albuquerque  
Manzano Mutigenerational Center

**February 1 League Day at the Legislature**  
Speakers and Lunch at the  
First Christian Church  
645 Webber Street, Santa Fe  
(three blocks south of the Round House  
with parking)

**March 19** LWVNM Board Meeting, Socorro  
12:30-5:30 p.m., Skeen Library  
New Mexico Tech

**May 14-15 LWVNM Convention**  
Holiday Inn Express, Los Alamos