



La Palabra

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www.lwvnm.org

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League Contacts

LWVNM

Meredith Machen, President
president@lwvnm.org
505-577-6337

Central New Mexico

2315 San Pedro NE, #F6
Albuquerque, NM 87110
505-884-8441
www.lwvnm.org
Andrea Targhetta, President

Greater Las Cruces

P.O. Box 8322
Las Cruces, NM 88006
www.lwvnlc.org
Erika Graf-Webster, President

Los Alamos

P.O. Box 158
Los Alamos, NM 87544
505-662-3825
www.lwvlosalamos.org
Barbara Calef, President

Santa Fe County

1472 St. Francis Drive
Santa Fe, NM 87505
505-982-9766
www.lwvsfc.org
Donna Reynolds, President

La Palabra Editor

Miriam Ries
505-316-0825
mrries415@yahoo.com

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.

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May 16-17, 2015

LWVNM Convention



SAVE THE DATES

See details on page 16.

President's Message



A major focus of the LWVNM Board is program planning, even at election time. All summer and fall, while working on voter registration (including problems at the NM Motor Vehicle Departments), candidate forums, Voters Guides, state and local issues and educational activities, we use our League positions, our "Program." This election, which was so poisoned by dark money and personal attack ads, made us even more committed to passing stronger campaign finance laws and creating an independent ethics commission in our state. Our excellent position on the subject continues to provide a firm basis for advocacy on the issue in the upcoming Legislative session. It is imperative that the voices of the many are heard above the .01% of corporations and individuals who are trying to overpower the vote with their campaign ads, making people cynical about all politicians and government itself. This election also made us vow to do our utmost to protect the rights of all eligible citizens to vote. We will stand up against photo ID, which disenfranchises many minority, disabled, and elderly voters, citing careful research that counters exaggerations about voter fraud. Having fair and accessible elections is the key to a democracy for the people, of the people, and by the people.

So where are we on program planning? In the next few months, we need to decide which in-depth studies we will conduct. Because the League values careful information-gathering and the deliberative procedures that result in balanced positions, we focus on only one or two new issues to

study each two years. We also examine which of our positions need updating.

Between now and May 17, when our biennial Convention ends, every League member has the opportunity to influence the selection of the issues on which the League will focus its energy. To keep League program vital, it is important that a large number of members participate in state program planning.

This winter, members of each local League will review our current state positions in Government, Social Policy, and Sustainability and decide which positions they believe should be retained, dropped, restudied, or updated. Fortunately, the LWVNM Board adopted the new comprehensive Natural Resources position at its November meeting, so that is ready for Convention delegates to ratify, with revisions if necessary. State-level studies proposed in the local League program planning meetings are considered by the local boards and then the state board. The LWVNM Board can also propose new studies, concurrences, and updates.

When considering new studies, we look at the availability of interested League members to work on the committee (preferably more than one local League is involved), whether the issue is one where governmental action is necessary, and whether the issue is one in which the League is likely to make a difference.

Based on the local League input from around the state, the LWVNM Board determines at the March meeting which items to present to Convention delegates as either "recommended" or "not recommended."

As League members and informed citizens know, our well-researched positions are critical to improving the quality of life in

New Mexico. We hope that you will consider proposing a study or that you will serve on one of our diligent study committees. Study committees conduct research and interviews, analyze information, clarify issues, identify problems, write study reports, and discuss issues with other LWV members. Once they come up with consensus questions and get member agreement on specific elements, they propose wording to the LWVNM Board for consideration and approval. After the wording is finalized and a new position is adopted by the LWVNM Board, it can be used for advocacy. To increase public understanding, we release our study reports or summaries.

Yes, it may sound a bit daunting to conduct a study and come up with a new position, but it is so important and the only sure way to make a difference in our state. League members around the country look to each other for ways to effect positive change. Being part of a huge national organization, we also benefit from the studies that are conducted in other states. Sometimes we can do more limited studies and come up with a position through concurrence.

All proposals for program adoption will be printed in the Spring La Palabra, our Convention issue, which will come out by April 16 (30 days before the Convention). We hope yours will be among them. We also invite you to be Convention delegates, so you can help decide which new studies need to be conducted.

League members are a special breed of committed citizens! We appreciate your support, your ideas, and your involvement. Thank you for all you do to improve our communities.

- Meredith Machen



Joint School Board and Community College Board Elections

Unfortunately, Constitutional Amendment 1, which would have allowed school board elections to be held jointly with non-partisan elections, failed in this past election.

Senator Daniel Ivey-Soto, who is also the Executive Director of the NM Association of County Clerks and an LWVCNM member, proposed the amendment but acknowledged that the wording may have confused voters. In order to change the voting rights sections of the Constitution, a 75% majority is required. The measure garnered 58% approval. In Bernalillo County, combining school board with municipal elections would save taxpayers between \$300,000 and \$500,000. Santa Fe Community College Governing Board and Santa Fe Public School Board will hold a joint election for the very first time this winter, following the lead of Los Alamos, which has held joint school board and UNMLA board elections for years. By law, Election Day for school board elections is the first Tuesday in February. Early voting runs January 14- 30, 2015.

Bravo to communities that voluntarily hold joint college and school board elections, thereby reducing the cost to taxpayers and increasing turnout. This small step in the right direction is the only one possible for now.

-Meredith Machen, Voter Services Chair



New Position on Natural Resources Adopted by Board

At its November meeting, the Board of Directors adopted a new position on Natural Resources, which replaces the 1987 position. The new position reflects extensive comments received during meetings of the Natural Resources Committee with the local Leagues of Los Alamos, Santa Fe, Central New Mexico, and Greater Las Cruces. The Board believes that the position now comprehensively addresses today's important environmental concerns, including environmental justice, air and water quality, climate change, energy and mining, transportation, land use, agriculture and waste management. The 2010 position on Water Supply has not been changed. The new position is available for review at the League website.

*-Lee Lockie
Natural Resources Director*

The 2015 New Mexico Legislative Session LWVNM Priorities



The 2015 session of the New Mexico Legislature will be a long session lasting 60 days, so legislators can consider legislation on any subject. For those of you new to New Mexico, the Legislature meets every year, but on even numbered years, the session is only 30 days long and can only deal with budget items and issues that are prioritized by the governor.

The 2015 Legislative Session will have new leadership in the House of Representatives, and we will have to see what priorities they will put forward. Increased funding and improved policies for public education are top League priorities for this session. The League will also be prioritizing support for ethics and campaign finance reforms. The League will be supporting legislation that furthers voting rights. We know that Secretary of State Duran wants to require a photo ID for voting, so we can expect legislation on that subject. If so, opposition to this inevitable disenfranchisement of voters will be a major priority of the League. Other League concerns include opposing tax breaks that reduce New Mexico revenues and threaten funding for essential programs; health cost transparency legislation; opposing repeal of driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants; and environmental protection.

To keep up with the LWVNM's activities leading up to and during this Legislative session you can subscribe to the Action email distribution list by going to <http://www.lwvnm.org/links.html>.

Please plan to attend League Day at the Legislature on February 9-10. See more information in this issue.

-Dick Mason, VP and Action Chair

Local League News

LWV Central New Mexico

We started off our general election season moderating one of the LWVNM forums in Albuquerque. Approximately 70 people attended to hear the candidates vying for Secretary of State and Attorney General. The forum was recorded and an hour of it was replayed on KUNM radio. CNM also made voter registration available before the event.

CNM sponsored a candidate forum for Bernalillo County Sheriff, which was well attended. The forum followed the usual format with a small deviation—each candidate was allowed to ask the other one question. Our moderator, Mary H. Smith, said this was well received and the candidates were civil, but it sparked bantering concerning past legal troubles.

Registration of voters kept our registration agents busy. CNM registered students who were 18 or would be turning 18 by Election Day from El Dorado High School, Highland High School, and Next Generation Academy. Our Voter Services Director and one other member attended two naturalization ceremonies, giving the new citizens a chance to register and some information about the League.

KOAT TV held a gubernatorial candidate debate and LWVCNM supplied the timekeeper. We printed 40,000 Voters Guides, which were distributed all over Albuquerque and Sandoval County. The Guide was also available on our website and Vote411.org.

Our newly formed Westside unit heard from David Esparza, a hydrologist, concerning water pollution, scarcity and water rights. They also heard from Eleanor Bravo of Food

& Water Watch on food safety and how fracking contaminates our food, air, and water.

CNM and the NM branch of the ACLU have joined the APD Forward coalition of community organizations aiding Albuquerque's police department in reforms set down in the consent decree to which the DOJ and the city have agreed. Peter Simonson, Director of the ACLU-NM, explained the plan to CNM members. The CNM membership participated in calls to Mayor Berry informing him of our concerns regarding the reforms needed for the city's police department.

Joe Monahan, a political blogger and author, spoke to us about the outcome of the election and his take on what transpired. He talked about the ads, the polls, the money, and the back story on some of the players. A lively discussion resulted from questions asked by our members.

-Andrea Targhetta, President

LWV Greater Las Cruces

October was spent on our Voter Services activities, of course. We got wonderful kudos for our Voters Guide, which came out just three days before early voting started. EVERY local candidate was represented in the Guide.

We had conducted a candidate forum in September for state-wide candidates, then did two more in October, one for County candidates (the Sheriff's race was strongly contested), and one for the local House of Representatives candidates. We were proud to be able to offer, for the first time ever, simultaneous Spanish translations for the attendees. Sadly, not many took advantage of this service. However, this led to a meeting

with CAFé and the Ocotillo Institute's Empowerment Congress, both of which have a strong presence in the Hispanic community. As a result, they are committed to collaborating with the League to develop good procedures for engaging the Hispanic community in future election cycles.

All the candidates thanked us for doing the forums. One said, "The League's forums are the GOLD STANDARD for these events." How very rewarding it is to hear comments like that!

Back in September, we identified four "top priority" issues for our advocacy efforts in the upcoming 2015 Legislative Session: Affordable Housing, Education, Water and Health. The committees focusing on these areas prepared fact sheets about these issues. These fact sheets have been assembled into packets for our local legislators, and were handed out to them and to our members at the Legislative Breakfast on December 6. The packet was sent to legislators who could not attend the Breakfast (legislative committee meetings were already going on!).

Our Education Committee has been extremely busy during the fall months. A small study about STEM and for-profit virtual schools was completed and a Unit Meeting was held to discuss the study, resulting in a small revision of the Education Position. This revision has been approved by the Board, and has been forwarded to LWVNM to be considered for adoption by concurrence at the state League convention in May 2015. In addition, the Education Committee participated in a KRWG-TV presentation about teacher evaluation, and committee member Jane Ashe prepared an excellent paper about the politicization of the assessment of teacher quality. All the Education Committee reports are posted on our website.

Finally, we held a Voter Services post-mortem meeting in late November, where we reviewed all the 2014 Voter Services activities in great detail. A number of changes to the processes were identified that will improve the effectiveness, efficiency and community reach of Voter Services.

-Erika Graf-Webster, President

LWV Los Alamos

The Los Alamos League held four forums to inform voters about the candidates and charter amendments on the ballot. Attendance was high, with over 100 citizens for most of the meetings. The forums were taped by the community television station and recordings were available at the library. The League's Voters Guide was delivered to every household with the Los Alamos Monitor on October 1 and was also accessible on the League's website and at the library. Fifty-eight percent of the registered voters in the county cast ballots, mostly in person at a vote center. Half of the votes were cast during early voting. Voting ran smoothly until after 3 p.m. on Election Day, when a surge of citizens overwhelmed the vote centers. The County Clerk has already acted to prevent a recurrence by requesting additional stations for the next election.

Nearly three years ago Carol Clark started a new newspaper in Los Alamos. The Los Alamos Daily Post, available only on-line, has been successful since the first day. Clark and fellow journalist Bonnie Gordon described how they reached this point at the October Lunch with a Leader (LWL). Clark received training from the Small Business Center before she left her job at the Los Alamos Monitor to set out on her own to produce a publication focused on the community. Today the LA Daily Post carries 70 ads, and receives 70,000 unique visitors per month from 129 countries.

At the November LWL, Kurt Steinhaus, Director of Community Programs at Los Alamos National Laboratory, spoke about the laboratory's extensive programs for science, technology, engineering, and math education in northern New Mexico. Steinhaus's group is also active in providing technical assistance for small businesses and helping entrepreneurs start new companies.

Following months of meetings and research, members of the Ban the Bag Coalition, of which the League is a member, spoke to the Environmental Sustainability Board (ESB) on November 20, seeking their support in the effort to pass an ordinance to ban single use plastic bags. The ESB voted to support the goal, advising the group to bring a petition to the Council.

The Board of Public Utilities meets in the County's new Municipal Building, but it has failed to take advantage of the facilities for broadcasting the meetings. In November the League requested that they do so. The League also asked the County Council to work with the Board to develop a strategy for a public discussion of the issues facing our Utilities Department. Those issues include the re-structuring of the San Juan Generating Station and the apparent lack of a strategic plan to reach the County's goal of carbon neutrality by 2040.

-Barbara Calef, President

LWW Santa Fe County

Voter services activities kept the Santa Fe League bustling over the last few months. The Santa Fe League hosted a 3rd Congressional District Candidates' Forum that received a few brief days of intense media interest. At the forum held with Candidates Jefferson Byrd, Thomas Hook, and Ben Ray Lujan, Mr. Byrd used his opening remarks to read a statement chastising the League for its rules and demanding to know certain League members' party affiliations. He then walked out of the

forum. As a result, the voters present didn't have the opportunity to hear his views on a wide range of important federal issues. The League responded with an opinion editorial and went on the record with a number of other media outlets. Candidate Lujan mentioned the "walk out" during a televised live debate the next day.

In a continuing partnership with the Santa Fe New Mexican, the Santa Fe League published a 2014 General Election Voters Guide. The 16-page guide was included in the daily newspaper delivery in early October, and the League obtained an extra 2,000 issues for distribution. Approximately 25,000 Voters Guides were disseminated throughout the Santa Fe area. The office was staffed to handle the extra calls during the last few days before the election.

The Santa Fe League hosted a well-attended program on campaign finance reform in mid-November with Senator Peter Wirth, Common Cause Executive Director, Viki Harrison, and Stuart Bluestone, Special Counsel in the Attorney General's Office. The program was designed to help kick-off the national Campaign Finance Study and Update, which was announced at the meeting. The panel noted that the effort to strengthen ethics and campaign finance laws will be difficult to achieve. A huge thanks goes to Santa Fe's Program Chair, Judy Williams, for the wonderful job of setting up this lively program.

The Santa Fe League met with Mayor Javier Gonzales in early November to discuss his initiatives and ask questions of interest to League members. The League also hosted a tour of the city/county recycling center. The center collects nearly everything that can be recycled but would like to see a higher recycling rate in Santa Fe. With that goal in mind, the city is planning to change its collection process. It was fun to get a "behind the scenes" tour of their operation.

-Donna M. Reynolds, President

Becky, Jody, Diane, and Erika Send You



The Nominating Committee for LWVNM* (see below) is happy to announce that a few positions are open for the new Board of Directors that will take office at the state League's Annual Convention in 2015. Our current board, under Meredith Machen's knowledgeable and passionate presidency, has agreed to continue as follows:

Officers

President	Meredith Machen
Vice-President	Dick Mason (also Action co-chair with Barbara Calef)
Secretary	Carol Tucker Trelease
Treasurer	Cheryl Haaker

Directors

Program	Judy Williams
Natural Resources	Barbara Calef and Judy Williams
Reproductive Rights	Diane Goldfarb
Health Care	Dick Mason and Judy Williams

[Note: The board meets for 2-5 hours six times a year, in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, or Socorro, with the first meeting held right after each convention or council.]

Off-Board Positions

La Palabra Editor: Miriam Ries

*Nominating Committee: Becky Shankland, Jody Larson, Diane Goldfarb, Erika Graf-Webster

Archivist/Historian: Barbara Goedecke

Budget Committee: Adair Waldenberg, chair, plus four members

Membership and Leadership Development: Linda Moscarella

GAPING HOLES: These positions are either vacant or held by people who are not continuing:

Membership: an on-board position. The Membership Chair's primary job is to track the Members-at-large and be sure that they receive appropriate communications, including connecting them with their closest Leagues. Ideas for boosting League membership around the state can also be part of this position.

Webmaster: Cheryl Haaker has been our heroic webmaster but needs to retire from that position. We need a special person to take over the critically important role of webmaster of www.LWVNM.org. Cheryl promises to help and support whoever takes over this key position. Unlike the local League websites, maintaining the current website is not a huge job. The state League website is the repository of member resources, including our positions, policies, publications, and advocacy efforts.

Communications: Get to know exactly what the League is doing statewide and help us get the news out. You'll be assisted by the president and other leaders who will help draft and edit press releases and fliers. While we prefer the Chair to be an on-board position (which means attending most of the LWVNM Board meetings each year), we also invite others to apply.

Voters Guide Editor: This position requires only a four-month commitment, from June to September in 2016. With a committee of local Voters Guide editors, establish a schedule, compose questions for federal and statewide offices, and solicit photos and responses to the selected questions from candidates. Compile the results for the local League editors, and post them on the LWVNM website. Information on Constitutional Amendments and bonds is also prepared (on-board or off-board position).

Issue Specialists: People interested in following a particular issue may form a committee and work through education and advocacy to increase League members' knowledge and awareness of that issue. Besides the issues for which we already have Directors (see above), we are currently following these issues: Education; Immigration; and Marriage Equality. If you'd like to join one of these groups or lead one, let us know.

Finally, we'd be delighted with new faces on the board in any of the positions that League members might be interested in—or inspire us with a new idea! Our Bylaws give us some flexibility in the Board structure, so we welcome volunteers.

Your Nominating Committee will be asking for your help and ideas—if you don't call us, we'll call you.

Becky Shankland: Rebecca.shankland@gmail.com; 505-672-9106 (Los Alamos)

Jody Larson: DTLars@aol.com; (505) 982-0776 (Santa Fe)

Diane Goldfarb: dgoldfarb1@comcast.net (505) 821-4229 (Albuquerque/Bernalillo)

Erika Graf-Webster: egrafwebster@q.com (575) 521-0600 (Greater Las Cruces)

Education— Are We Headed for a Perfect Storm?



The League is committed to having a free, high quality public education system, and we will be advocating for adequate and fair funding so that we can reach that goal. Increased funding is especially critical now because of the huge number of changes in and challenges to our educational system. The State Equalization Guarantee law is not working as intended. Local districts with a high percentage of English Language Learners (ELL) and other at-risk factors (such as high poverty as determined by those eligible for free or reduced lunch) are especially burdened by underfunding. The current funding is also inconsistent across the state. Certain districts and charter schools receive discretionary “below the line” funding from the Public Education Department; others pass local mill levies for facilities and equipment; still others get federal grants.

New Mexico is ranked 49th in education, yet it is spending 8% less per student in 2014-15 than it did in 2008. (New Mexico spends about \$2.6 billion on schools out of its \$6.2 billion budget, but much of that goes for other costs besides instruction.) Meanwhile, our expenditures for incarceration have shown extraordinary growth. Investment in education has been shown to reduce the amount that states spend on corrections. New Mexico’s economy would be much stronger if we invested more in education, which results in a better workforce, job growth, and poverty reduction.

On the National Assessment of Educational Progress tests in 2013, only 16% of New Mexico’s eighth graders demonstrated math proficiency, and only 20% demonstrated reading proficiency. (The NAEP is the only test that has been given for decades to a sample of students in every state, so it is the only consistent measure of students’ skills we have.) Though our high school graduation rate has improved, about half of the graduates who enroll in our state universities need remedial courses. A landmark MALDEF* lawsuit has declared the funding allocated to students with disabilities or economically disadvantage and English language learners “insufficient and in violation of the educational mandate of the New Mexico Constitution.” The case, which also goes after the New Mexico Public Education Department’s teacher evaluation and school grading systems, will be heard in November 2015 and is expected to have major implications for the education of many of the 336,000 students enrolled in our public schools. Why is New Mexico always ranked at or near the bottom of all lists? Part of the answer lies in the factors measured annually by the non-profit Annie E. Casey Foundation and published in their *Kids Count* report.** Almost two-thirds of students live in poverty and about one-fifth are not proficient in English, which is not their primary language. Many students live in single-parent or multi-family households and lack access to early childhood education, adequate food, and social services.

The increased standards brought about by the adoption of the Common Core will mean that students who graduate in the future should be better prepared for college, but educators have been expected to implement those standards without adequate funding for essential professional training and new instructional materials and curricula.

Both the state and federal Education departments have heard from state education leaders about the need to give teachers and principals more time to learn the higher standards before they and their students are held accountable for them. Many teachers and principals will face dismissal because 50% of their evaluation is determined by how well their students do on tests and on participation rates. The stress caused by these increased accountability measures is driving out experienced teachers and discouraging interest in the profession, thus exacerbating New Mexico's teacher shortage. Is New Mexico headed for a perfect storm?

We all believe that students should graduate with the skills needed for college and career success. Now let's provide the necessary resources. LWVNM advocated for increased funding recommended by the Legislative Education Study Committee and passed by the 2014 Legislature only to be vetoed by the governor. We will lobby once again for the bill. If some major increase in educational funding does not occur quickly, New Mexico can expect to pay high settlement fees for failing to provide adequate educational resources to support students. In addition, we could lose federal funding that comes with the Race to the Top waiver from No Child Left Behind if the state does not help more teachers get up to speed with the new standards and assessments.

Many are advocating that the state increase the current 5.5 percent distribution rate from the Land Grant Permanent Fund to spend more on public education, especially early childhood programs. However, the State Investment Council and others warn that low gas and oil prices will quickly diminish the fund, which in May 2014 had assets worth nearly \$56 million.

-Meredith Machen, Education Chair

***MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund)** is a national non-profit civil rights organization.
http://www.maldef.org/news/releases/santa_fe_court_declares_education_a_fundamental_right.

**In 2013, New Mexico was ranked last overall in child well-being and 49th in education. See more at http://datacenter.kidscount.org/~media/61/2013KC_state_profile_NM.pdf.

**League Day at the Legislature
Legislative Reception
Monday, February 9, 2015, 5:30-7:30 pm**



Garrett’s Desert Inn, 311 Old Santa Fe Trail
(just down the street from the Roundhouse toward the Plaza)

Panel Discussion: Education Funding & Priorities

Senator Mimi Stewart, former Chair of House Education Committee
Representative Dennis Roch, Legislative Education Study Committee
Dr. Veronica Garcia, Executive Director, NM Voices for Children
Don Moya, Chief Financial Officer, Albuquerque Public Schools

Come meet with fellow members and legislators and experts and learn more about the issues.

Tuesday, February 10
Hearings at the Roundhouse from 8:00 am on
League Information Event from 10:30 am to noon
New Mexico Land Office, Morgan Hall
310 Old Santa Fe Trail

Fred Nathan, Esq., Hospital Pricing Transparency Initiative
Dr. Gabriel Sanchez, Voter Photo ID and Voter Disenfranchisement

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Please see bios below and accompanying articles in this issue of La Palabra on our priorities for the 2015 Legislative Session and on education.

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Packets of materials for League Day will be available at the Reception February 9 and in the lobby of Garrett’s Desert Inn from 7-9 a.m. on February 10. Members may wish to attend committee hearings and/or sessions in the House and Senate before 10:15 am when we will head down a few doors toward the Plaza to the Land Office to listen to the panelists.

BIOS for Education Panel/Monday Reception

Senator Mimi Stewart (D- Albq.) served in the NM House of Representatives from 1995 to 2014. She left her role as Chair of the House Education Committee this session to take the seat Senator Keller held before his election to State Auditor. She brings years of teaching experience and expertise in grappling with the challenges students and educators face in New Mexico. Her deep understanding of the needs of students at risk of low academic achievement because of language differences, poverty, and increased testing has brought her national recognition.

Rep. Dennis Roch (R-Logan) serves on the House Education Committee and is also Superintendent of the Logan School District. He is on the Public School Funding Formula Task Force, and he has sponsored important legislation to provide teachers and community schools with needed resources. Prior to being elected to the House in 2008, he served on the NM Public Education Commission (formerly the State Board of Education).

Dr. Veronica García, Executive Director of New Mexico Voices for Children, served as New Mexico's first Cabinet Secretary of Education for seven years. Her decades of work within the state's K-12 education system range from teacher to principal to superintendent, first of Santa Fe Public Schools, then Albuquerque Public Schools. She also served as executive director of New Mexico Coalition of School Administrators.

Don Moya, Chief Financial Officer for Albuquerque Public Schools, is an expert in public education funding. Prior to being hired by APS to develop and oversee the budget, he served as Deputy Secretary for Finance and Operations at the NM Education Department. As a budget analyst and planner, he is often called upon by legislators and educators to discuss the intricacies of funding both traditional and local charter schools.

BIOS for League Day Informational Event/Tuesday morning

Fred Nathan is the Executive Director of Think New Mexico. Before founding this highly regarded non-partisan public policy think tank, Fred served as Special Counsel to NM Attorney General Tom Udall from 1991-1998. In that capacity, he was the architect of several successful legislative initiatives and was in charge of NM's lawsuit against the tobacco industry, which resulted in a \$1.25 billion settlement for the state. This year Think NM is working to win passage of legislation making hospital prices and quality transparent with the aim of lowering health care costs in New Mexico.

Dr. Gabriel Sanchez is an Associate Professor of Political Science and Interim Executive Director of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center for Health Policy at the University of New Mexico. As Director of Research for Latino Decisions, he also provides political commentary to several state, national, and international media outlets and conducts studies on the impact of voter photo IDs on the minority and elderly populations, the relationship between racial/ethnic identity and political engagement, Latino health policy, and minority legislative behavior.

Accommodations: Garrett's Desert Inn once again is offering us a very **special rate of \$59 plus tax for single occupancy/\$69 for double occupancy and waiving the \$8 parking fee.** Reserve your space under the code "**SWING VOTE**" to take advantage of this rate. After the **January 25 cut-off date**, rooms will cost \$99 for a single room if space is available. Call **1-800-888-2145** to make a reservation with a credit card or advance deposit. Be sure to mention the code.

There are a number of good, close-by restaurants.

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

For further information on League Day, please call 505-884-8441, visit www.lwvnm.org, e-mail action@lwvnm.org, or call Dick Mason at 505-239-3804.



LWVNM Mental Health Services Study Report and Provisional Recommendations

Since the LWVNM Convention in May 2013, the Mental Health Services Study Committee has researched the mental health services available in order to determine what needs to be implemented to improve care. It has also investigated the crisis that resulted when the providers of mental health care services were fired by the Human Services Department. This crisis has heightened public awareness and increased the desire for action on the part of local, state, and national officials.

The Committee does not recommend any changes in language to the current Mental Health position, believing it is general enough to cover our recommendations for action. Our provisional recommendations, based on two years of research and activity at many of the extensive meetings, hearings and forums are as follows:

1. Stress use of distance technology, such as Project Echo, to bring services to underserved areas, along with clinics in every county to reduce wait time.
2. Provide a continuum of care in every county. A supportive Community Engagement Team (CET) would link persons with serious mental illness to voluntary treatment and other services as an alternative to calling law enforcement and as a supplement to other intervention efforts. CET members would include qualified and licensed mental health professionals; case managers, community support workers or core service workers; and at least one peer (adult or youth) who lives with mental illness.
3. Expand youth activity programs and mental health services at community centers in every county.
4. Have the state work with counties, cities, or established regions to develop and fund aftercare planning and transitional services for 18 to 25 year olds exiting CYFD custody (i.e. foster care, detention). All individuals being released from detention or treatment facilities should be given a copy of their health records; one month's worth of prescriptions, if needed; a referral to a medical home, behavioral health provider, or an assigned care coordinator (for more complex cases). For those exiting detention centers or on parole, require them to see their medical home provider within one month of release.

5. Establish crisis stabilization centers in each county where first responders and others can voluntarily bring persons with serious mental illness, those experiencing disability-triggered stress or crisis to services rather than inappropriately taking them to jail or the emergency room. It is important to provide linkages to services and community support to individuals at the triage centers and appropriate adequate funding to support this alternative.
6. Establish and fund an adequate infrastructure of supportive services before passing a Kendra's Law-type bill.
7. Increase Medicaid reimbursements for coordination of care and support efforts to reduce fragmentation between providers by encouraging improved collaboration, partnerships, and service integration.
8. Secure funding via SAMSHA grants, foundations, PCORI, or other sources to build mental health infrastructure for early detection and service enhancements and support efforts to make quality mental health services and medications more affordable (Medicaid).
9. Increase the number of school based health centers and the availability of mental health services provided through school-based health centers (including during non-school hours); evaluate school mental health services outsourcing processes and outcomes.
10. Support all efforts to increase the number of behavioral (and physical) health providers working in New Mexico to improve services and decrease wait times for diagnosis and medication refills.

The LWVNM Mental Health Services Study Committee will meet January 22, 2015 to finalize these proposed recommendations for action.

*-Shelly Shepherd & Jan Bray
Co-Chairs
LWVNM Mental Health Services Study Committee*

Notification of Convention

2015 LWVNM Convention May 16 – 17, 2015 Albuquerque, NM
Crowne Plaza Hotel, 1901 University NE, Albuquerque, NM 87102
Meredith Machen, President



The Central New Mexico League invites League members from around the state to attend the 2015 LWVNM Convention May 16-17. The convention will adopt a program for study and action, elect officers and directors, adopt a balanced budget for the next two years, consider revising the bylaws and transact such other business as may be presented.



On May 15 there will be an informal evening reception at the home of Carol Tucker Trelease. A luncheon will open the convention on Saturday at noon. One of the speakers will be Linda Wassenich, LWVUS Board Member, who will discuss voting and election issues from her national perspective as well as from her various leadership experiences with LWV Texas. The first Plenary Session follows. Our evening banquet speaker will be Martha Burk, political psychologist, activist, and syndicated columnist. She serves as Money Editor for *Ms. Magazine*.

Sunday's Plenary Session will begin at 8:30 am and conclude at approximately at noon. The LWVNM Board meeting with new officers will commence shortly thereafter.



Hotel reservation and convention registration information will be in the Spring *La Palabra*. The deadline for the special rate is April 12, 2015.

Please let your president know if you would like to be a delegate. We need your voice. We also welcome any member who wants to attend all or part of the Convention as an observer. The Saturday luncheon and banquet will also be open to non-members.

Please also look for some items in good condition to bring to the silent auction.

-Andrea Targhetta
LWVNM President

PNM Update



Coal-fired power plant

In November, PNM said it was considering the purchase of the San Juan Coal Mine, which supplies fuel for the coal-fired San Juan Generating Station (SJGS). The SJGS is subject to a separate hearing before the PRC on January 5, 2015. (See the Fall *La Palabra* for details.) The mine's coal contracts with the four companies that own SJGS expire in 2017, and many environmental organizations have urged that the mine be closed and that PNM replace the coal with cleaner fuels and more renewables. The owners want to know what their coal supply and price will be after 2017 before they agree to the closure of two units at SJGS. It is unclear whether they will have to have PRC approval for this.

Environmental organizations have performed separate analyses and do not believe buying the mine would be the least-cost option. They say the coal purchase will harm ratepayers and the environment and is not what smart utilities are doing.

On November 24, the League of Women Voters of New Mexico, 10 environmental advocacy organizations and 23 religious leaders signed a letter to the PNM urging them to reconsider this idea. The letter is reprinted below.

To: Pat Vincent-Collawn, Chief Executive Officer - PNM Resources, Inc.
Ron Darnell, Senior Vice President, Public Policy – PNM Resources, Inc.

Re: A Chance to Move New Mexico and PNM toward a Clean Energy Future
by Transitioning Away from Coal at the San Juan Mine

Dear Pat Vincent-Collawn and Ron Darnell,

In just a few short weeks, your company will face a unique and important choice: continue to spend PNM ratepayers' money on dirty, expensive coal or tap into New Mexico's vast renewable energy potential by investing in wind and solar to power our homes.

While PNM has taken some positive steps to reduce coal burning at the San Juan Generating Station, purchasing the San Juan coal mine or constructing a new coal mine threatens to lock our community into a future of even more coal pollution at a time when we should be putting our resources into clean, affordable energy.

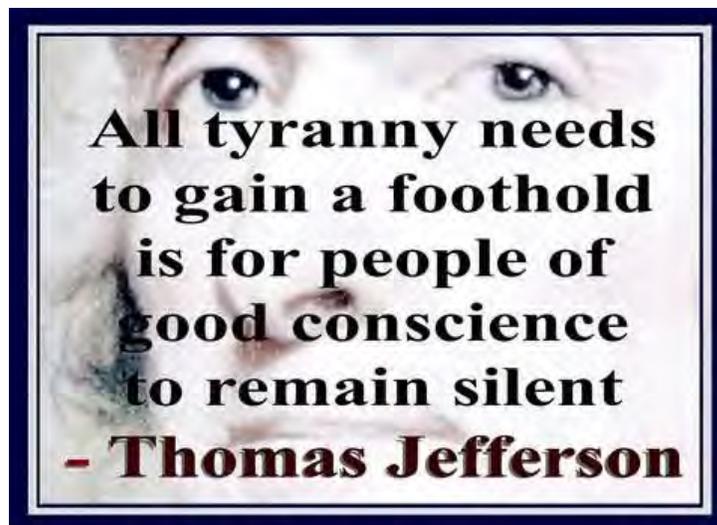
As an investment, coal is a risky bet. Across the country, the cost of coal is skyrocketing, while the cost of renewable energy continues to drop. Smart

companies like Berkshire Hathaway's NV Energy are already beginning to make this transition by retiring coal plants and increasing holdings in wind and solar. In community after community, local residents are demanding a future that relies on clean, appropriately sited renewable energy to move us beyond outdated, polluting coal-fired power plants. As the U.S. coal market continues to decline and market forces become increasingly inhospitable to coal, utilities like PNM would be wise to invest in smart, safe clean energy solutions rather than doubling down on coal.

Purchasing the San Juan Coal Mine threatens to prolong the life of one of the region's biggest threats to clean air, clean water, and public health. Along with the Navajo mine, the San Juan coal mine is a significant source of methane contributing to the now infamous methane hot spot in the Four Corners region, as well as other dangerous smog and carbon pollution. This coal-related pollution jeopardizes the health of frontline communities at the plant and across the state, and dirties our precious skies, waters, and national parks.

To protect both the public health and the financial security of our communities, we strongly urge PNM not to purchase the San Juan coal mine and instead truly commit to powering our state with clean, renewable energy.

/s/ Judy Williams
Natural Resources Director
LWVNM



CALENDAR 2015

- Jan 17** ***LWVNM Board meeting, Albuquerque, 11 am – 3 pm***
League Day updates. Consider LWVGLC Education position for concurrence and other program proposals.
- Feb 9** **Legislative Reception, 5:30-7:30 pm, Garrett's Desert Inn**
- Feb 10 Tues** ***League Day at the Legislature, NM Land Office, 10 am-noon***
- Feb 11 Wed** **League Table at the Legislature, East Hall, (Health Action Day)**
- March 22 or 29** **LWVNM Board meeting, Santa Fe, 11am –3 pm**
Finalize program recommendations for Convention.
- April 5** ***Deadline for La Palabra CONVENTION ISSUE***
- May 15** **Reception-Carol Tucker Trelease home**
- May 16** **Convention begins at noon, Crowne Plaza, ABQ,**
- May 17** **Convention adjourns noon-Board meeting follows**

LEGISLATIVE SESSION DATES

- January 20 Opening day (noon)
- February 19 Deadline for introduction of new bills
- March 21 Session ends (noon)
- April 10 Legislation not acted upon by governor is pocket vetoed
- June 19 Effective date of legislation not a general appropriation bill or a bill carrying an emergency clause or other specified date

LWVNM Board meetings are on Saturdays and are open to all members. To add agenda items, please write to leaders@lwvnm.org or contact Meredith Machen at 505 577-6337, mermachen@cybermesa.com. Please note: Packets for the Board meetings will go out at least 3 days before each meeting, so please be sure to send reports and other items 5 days in advance. Thank you.



**League of Women Voters of NM
2315 San Pedro NE, Suite F-6
Albuquerque, NM 87110**