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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.



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President's Corner

Judy Williams
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Happy New Year, everyone!

We're looking forward to a busy and productive year, beginning with the legislative session and an onslaught of bills and requests for money, as well as starting work on the Census, and gearing up for our biennial convention.

We're looking for energetic League members to serve on the LWVNM board. Please consider working on state-level portfolios with us – contact me and I'll pass your information to the Nominating Committee.

Journalism Under Fire

By Judy Williams

Early in December I had the privilege of attending the three-day conference, Journalism Under Fire, sponsored by the Santa Fe Council on International Relations. The conference addressed freedom of the press, fake news, persecution and exile; journalism at the U.S.-New Mexico border; and local and indigenous journalism. There were 65 speakers from around the world and 48 State Department-sponsored international journalism visitors.

The event seemed sufficiently important that I am summarizing some of it, both for information and potential for state and local advocacy. One overriding take away from the discussions was the enormous courage of the journalists – they continue to do their job in the face of harassment, death threats against themselves and families, imprisonment, and murder.

Persecution. Jason Rezaian of *The Washington Post* spent more than a year in an Iranian prison. He said persecution of journalists has been going on for years but it has ramped up recently. Journalists feel more in danger now that the U.S. has let go of its role as a moral authority. He and others pointed out that not only does the persecution harm the journalists, but it silences them. Then the public doesn't know the story.

An indigenous journalist who was arrested at Standing Rock just for being there said she spent 16 months and much money defending herself, but the real disaster was that, as she was the only journalist with extensive contacts in the native population, and was the only journalist there on that day, the story didn't get out.

Fake news. Dana Priest of *The Washington Post* described a fake news event in 2014, in which the Russian Internet Research Institute made up a story of a toxic plume in Louisiana. They used Twitter, Facebook and other platforms to push out fake videos and stories about it. The New York Times investigated and found no such event, but it set a pattern for future fake stories. Priest and other speakers said people, particularly the young, who rely on social media and watch Fox News don't always understand the difference between news, commentary and fake news.

Several speakers cited the destructive nature of Facebook, and the failure of the company to do anything about the hate and lies spread on its platform. Priest said that after Facebook changed its business model from the personal to "news" it became a platform for fake news. According to her, Facebook is considered partly responsible for the genocide against the Rohingya in Myanmar; it was the platform for a propaganda war against them by Buddhist monks and many others. She said the situation is similar in the Philippines and Ukraine. WhatsApp, which is owned by Facebook, is widely used in Brazil and helped
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to spread fake stories ahead of the recent presidential election there.

Alex Gorbachev, a Humphrey fellow at Arizona State University, said that propaganda has made Russia and Ukraine enemies. He said that in Ukraine fake news is so prevalent that no one believes anyone anymore. There is a website dedicated to debunking fake stories about Ukraine.

The U.S. - Mexico border. The panel was called “The Border as Piñata.” Angela Kocherga of *The Albuquerque Journal* talked about covering Ciudad Juarez and the risks of doing so. She said journalists now have to spend time disproving fake news. As an example, there was a story put out by Judicial Watch that there was an ISIS training camp in Cd. Juarez. Alfredo Corchado of *The Dallas Morning News* had to leave Mexico because of death threats from drug kingpins. He used to think his government (the U.S.) would protect him but he doesn’t believe that is true anymore. Impunity results in self-censorship and silencing of journalists.

The journalists also spoke of all the fake news about the caravan traveling through Mexico from Central America. It is hard to cover many of these stories, as journalists are human. They can become emotional about all the suffering.

New Mexico press challenges. Editors from newspapers around New Mexico spoke about challenges facing them. They said it has become the new normal for people to write hateful comments about articles. All of the panelists told stories about harassment of journalists at their news outlets and said they have been threatened with violence, burning down their offices and other things. Staci Matlock of *The Taos News* spoke of actions her paper took following the Annapolis shootings. These violent acts take their toll on reporters.

Julie Ann Grimm of the *Santa Fe Reporter* said that although people still comment about articles on the newspaper websites, where the paper can shut down vile comments, many now make comments on Facebook, which the newspapers can’t control.

Brienne Green of the *Artesia Daily Press* said she has received comments such as “we know where you live, write your stories accordingly.” Some reporters have turned over articles to out-of-county reporters because they received threats. Don Trapp of the *Rio Grande Sun* is famous for tough reporting. He said people have stopped threatening him because he will write the story anyway. His parents, who started the paper, were known to take no prisoners.

Journalism in Native American communities This kind of journalism is difficult. Conroy Chino and the rest of this panel talked about lack of access to information, and many free press issues. He said many non-native journalists don’t even try to cover native stories. He admitted it isn’t easy, because a journalist can’t just show up in Indian Country. The issue of missing and murdered indigenous women is a good example of the journalistic silence about Native American concerns in the mainstream press.

Public Information Officers The most significant story concerning covering state government is the increasing use of Public Information Officers (PIOs) to stifle reporting on state activities. PIOs were once knowledgeable people, but now they are just gatekeepers, preventing journalists from having access to state employees who actually know the subjects. Phil Casaus, Editor of the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, says now reporters have to really fact check what the PIOs say. The PIOs also prevent dialogue, insisting on doing everything by email.

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LWVNM Legislative Advocacy Workshop, December 8

By Barbara Calef



Jim Jackson, Senators Peter Wirth and Sander Rue address the crowd at the Advocacy Workshop held Dec. 8 in Santa Fe. (photo by Rebecca Shankland)

Senator Peter Wirth (D-Santa Fe) opened the LWVNM's annual advocacy workshop with the statement that "the landscape this year is very different." He went on to say that the governor-elect wants to hear from both sides and has promised to visit the legislators in their space, unlike the previous two governors, who insisted they go to the governor's offices.

Senator Sander Rue (R-Albuquerque) agreed with Wirth that legislators in New Mexico are not hyper-partisan. Wirth praised

the Republicans for insisting on starting meetings on time in the House when they were the majority party. Now he is trying to duplicate that practice in the Senate. It may be difficult in the next session, which Rue predicted will be "the wildest and craziest ever with a record number of bills," perhaps 6,000, not counting memorials.

Alerting the audience to expect big changes during the 2019 session, Wirth said that the leaders had agreed to implement a "rocket docket." Bills that had unanimously passed both houses in the last session only to be vetoed by the governor are going to be re-introduced and moved very quickly. The Consent Committee will review all of the bills and remove any if there is an objection, otherwise they will be on a fast track to the Consent Agenda and sent to the new governor early in the session.

Bills can be pre-filed between December 17 and January 11. (The session begins on January 15.) The advantage of pre-filing is a lower bill number. House Speaker Brian Egolf says that if it's not pre-filed, it's dead. Wirth expects 3,000-4,000 bills to be pre-filed! Rue noted that there is a carnival atmosphere at the Capitol when there's money and this session, "adding to the frenzy, the state is rolling in money."

Aspiring advocates need to understand the process for legislation and appropriations. A legislator must ask the Legislative Council Service to draft a bill and find a sponsor. Once the bill is filed, the Speaker of the House and/or the Senate Majority Floor Leader will make committee assignments. For a more detailed explanation of the process, read the policy and legislative action toolkit provided by Disability Rights New Mexico: <http://www.drnm.org/uploads/PDFs/2018%20Tool%20Kit%20Complete.pdf>. Wirth also recommended Googling NM State Senate Rules, House Rules, Joint Rules for the procedures.

The budget originates in the House. The House Appropriations Committee receives two budgets, one from the Legislative Finance Committee, which works on it all year. The second budget originates with the governor and comes from the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA). The committee must decide which budget to use or create a hybrid.

Once the bill, called HB 2, passes the House, it goes to the Senate, where it is assigned to the Senate Finance Committee.

Much of the surplus revenue has already been designated for replenishing the reserves, which were depleted during the lean years, and for education. (Wirth noted that the Court, in *Yazzie v. NM*, did not specify an amount to spend.) There will be an omnibus package of bills for criminal justice, and there will also be significant capital outlay for infrastructure repair.

Most legislators have no staff (exception – the leaders and the committee chairs) to tell them what a bill is about. They try to read the fiscal impact report (FIR), which is a bi-partisan analysis and also the committee analysis. There is a shortage of staff for policy research to help build knowledge for the legislators, so they must depend on other people they trust, including lobbyists.

We are the only state that does not pay legislators. Wirth noted that there will be new proposals coming from the House to pay legislators; a primary goal is to reduce conflicts of interest. Another goal is to increase diversity.

Both senators and the third speaker, Jim Jackson, consultant and former Executive Director of Disability Rights NM, emphasized the easy access New Mexicans have to their legislature. Recent innovations have made it even more transparent. The website, <https://www.nmlegis.gov/>, is easy to use and now has a bill-tracking feature. The site shows amendments to draft legislation, enabling the public to follow the discussion during hearings. And, as Senator Rue pointed out, you can now watch committee hearings in your pajamas from the comfort of your home. Furthermore, archiving allows the public to watch committee meetings from previous years. The Sunshine Portal gives access to government budgets, revenues, employees, contracts, and more.



LWVNM Action Chair Dick Mason with LWVNM President Judy Williams at the workshop. (photo by Rebecca Shankland)

Wirth emphasized the importance of working with coalitions from around the state so a legislator's own constituents can ask for his or her vote. The speakers recommended that advocates be brief and accurate at hearings. One approach is to focus on why a bill is important to the state; another is to "tell your own story." Wirth said the most important thing to do is to count your votes – you just need enough for passage, then move on to the next committee. Don't keep hounding legislators.

The way to kill a bill is to have the committee vote to table it. If the committee recommends a Do Not Pass (DNP), the bill can still advance to the floor and be passed.

The speakers suggested two possible roles for advocates. As Wirth said, "count your votes" and move on. (This year advocates for the National Popular Vote have deluged legislators; this has become irritating.) On the other hand, one could talk to those who disagree to learn why or to correct facts and misperceptions. At all times, remember that all the legislators are volunteers; they give up personal time to serve the public. Be respectful and courteous.

Jackson advised going to your legislator to advance an idea; they will be able to help you find someone working on the issue.



He also invited members of the audience to a forum and training session in Albuquerque on Saturday, January 12:

<http://www.drnm.org/uploads/PDFs/2018%20pre%20legis%20Invitation-RegistrationForm.pdf>

Audience members at the Advocacy Workshop held in Santa Fe Dec. 8 (Photo by Judy Williams).

Journalism Under Fire ...from page 3

This has had a chilling effect on journalism, and means that some stories never get written.

Individual reporters have been banned from meetings and employees at government agencies have been told not to speak to what are deemed “unfriendly” reporters. Further, some newspapers have been blackballed and employees ordered to stop reading those papers. Julie D’Val Westphal of the *Albuquerque Journal* said Governor Richardson canceled all the state subscriptions to the *Journal* and forbade employees to read it. This has happened under the last two administrations.

Julie Ann Grimm said sometimes they have no choice but to file a lawsuit to gain information. Even filing an Inspection of Public Records Act request is not always successful, or fails to produce documents in a timely manner.

Lack of access to the public’s business is a transparency issue, something the League may be able to influence. We will work with the new administration on it. Let me know if you’re interested – president@lwvnm.org.



Journalism
Under Fire
are we free without a free press?



**What we may expect when our women
all become Ju-Jutsu Suffragettes.**

By R. Wallis Mills, originally in *Punch*
Reprinted in *Health & Strength*, July 23, 1910.

First Call to Convention

The 2019 Convention of the League of Women Voters of New Mexico will be held May 18 and 19 in Los Alamos, New Mexico. The Convention will adopt a program, elect a board of directors, adopt a budget for the next two years, and consider revising the bylaws.

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). In addition, all LWVNM 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 attendees are always welcome.

There will be a reception for those arriving on the evening of Friday, May 17. The business meetings will be held in the mornings on May 18 and 19. Saturday afternoon will feature at least one workshop, local sightseeing, and a hike. In the evening there will be a banquet, open to all.

Please let your League board know if you would like to attend. Mark the date on your calendar! Complete details will be published in the spring issue of *La Palabra*.

—Judy Williams, President

Save the Dates for League Days at the Legislature, February 6 and 7, 2019

League table at the Roundhouse all day Feb. 7 - NEED VOLUNTEERS! Please contact Judy Williams at President@lwvnm.org.

Rooms are available at Garrett's Desert Inn for \$79 plus tax (free parking). The rooms will be held only until January 16, 2019. See notice on page 11.

Legislative reception, Rio Chama Steakhouse, 414 Old Santa Fe Trail, Wednesday, February 6, 2019
5:30 - 7:30 pm. Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver will be the speaker.

League Day at the Legislature Thursday, February 7. 10:30 - noon,
State Land Office,
Morgan Hall, 310 Old Santa Fe Trail, across from Garrett's Desert Inn.

Spent Nuclear Fuel Storage Study Committee Progress

By Karen Douglas, Committee Chair

The LWVNM Spent Nuclear Fuel (SNF) Storage study committee continues to evaluate the rapidly developing progress toward licensure of two Spent Nuclear Fuel (SNF) Consolidated Interim Storage Facilities (CISF) in SE NM and West TX which, if approved, would receive SNF from both the shutdown nuclear reactors and the 99 currently operating US commercial nuclear reactors. Approval of the applications under review by the US NRC could result in receipt of spent nuclear fuel by both sites as early as 2022.

At their meeting on December 8 committee members agreed that seeking consensus to establish a new NM state position defining posture regarding the proposed Consolidated Interim Storage Facility applications under review by the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission was not recommended. The committee members agreed to research and evaluate the information available and report back to the committee in January 2019.

The activities of the NM Senate Radioactive and Hazardous Materials Committee (Senator Jeff Steinborn, Chair) were also discussed; many concerns voiced by LWVNM are also currently being addressed by this committee. The committee is regularly evaluating progress of the two CISF applications (both NM and TX CISF project acceptance of SNF by 2022) and providing a valuable critique.

Actions from meeting:

- Contact NRC Public Affairs/Burnell for response to 7/30/18 LWVNM correspondence detailing concerns with the Holtec Environment Report. Request information about which government department is responsible for overseeing the transportation of the SNF. Report results to committee and board by the January 19, 2019 LWVNM Board meeting – Karen Douglas
- Review relevant Safety Evaluation Report sections of HOLTEC/ELEA/NM (HOLTEC/HI-STORM UMAX) & ISP/WCS/TX (AREVA NUHOMS) Nuclear Safety Analysis Reports submitted to NRC to evaluate potential for outer cask failure during the storage period - Kathy Taylor
- Review sections of HOLTEC/NM & ISP/TX Nuclear Safety Analysis licensing report submitted to NRC discussing SNF accidents and NRC transportation risk documents to determine whether rail transport safety is assured – Karen Wentworth
- Research past and current transport of SNF in states with reactors to determine distances, rail line structural stability and inspection regimen, and transport frequency – Kathy Taylor
- Review geological concerns regarding stability near Ogallala Aquifer evaluated by a TX geologist– Laura Atkins
- Monitor bills from the NM Senate Radioactive and Hazardous Materials Committee (Senator Jeff Steinborn, Chair) and identify those impacting the NM & TX CISF applications with NM roles and responsibilities – Meredith Machen

- Identify federal sources of funding for NM/ELEA & ISP/WCS/TX by researching NM and Congressional records – Karen Wentworth
- Evaluate records to determine ownership of NM/ELEA land – Barbara Calef

Once the tasks have been completed, the committee will then need to discuss the findings. If they agree on a course of action, they will then need to seek LWVUS approval before undertaking any advocacy.

Report on CAVU Film and Panel Discussion, Oct. 9

By Barbara Calef

David and Vaughn Smith founded the non-profit organization CAVU in 2004, taking the anagram used by pilots to signify “*Ceiling and Visibility Unlimited*” and modifying it, as they explain on their website: “In a world of political discord, turbulence and social unrest: Calm Air; in a world clouded by greed, burning forests and industrial pollution: Visibility Unlimited.” They showed their most recent film and hosted a panel discussion at the Lensic Theater in Santa Fe on Tuesday, October 9.

One of their projects for New Mexico, called “Unearthed,” focuses on concerns raised by the oil and gas boom. Their approach is to bring all parties to the table for discussion. “That’s how Colorado succeeded in passing their methane rule,” David Smith said. To prove his point, he noted the variety of people in the audience; they included Speaker of the House Brian Egolf, the Lea County Sheriff, ranchers, and a member of the Mescalero Apache Nation.



Photo courtesy of Western Values Project. Org.

CAVU has produced five short videos; following their screening of Chapter 5, which was filmed recently in southeastern New Mexico, journalist Laura Paskus moderated a panel discussion about the impact of the oil boom on that part of the state. The panelists were Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham, candidate for governor; Garrett VeneKlasen, former executive director of the NM Wildlife Federation; Alisa Ogden, a rancher from the Carlsbad area who is a former president of the Cattle Growers Association; and Jon Goldstein, Director of Regulatory and Legislative Affairs at the Environmental Defense Fund. Rep. Steve Pearce had been invited, too.

The panelists did not disagree with each-other in their responses to questions ranging from specific problems faced by residents in the Permian Basin to the broader issues of climate change. Ogden, who receives royalties for oil and gas extracted from her property, criticized the Oil Conservation Department (OCD) for not adequately regulating the disposal of produced water, which is polluting the landscape. She believes that there should be a push to treat it chemically so that it can be re-used for fracking.

She also criticized the state for not doing enough to improve the roads in the area, which are overcrowded and failing because they were not built to withstand the heavy oilfield truck

traffic. No one suggested how to address the problem of massive thefts of equipment in the oilfield.

All of the panelists agreed that the state should require the capture of methane. The current low price of natural gas means that petroleum companies have no profit incentive to do it otherwise. Goldstein pointed out that new methane regulations would create new jobs.



Governor-elect Michelle Lujan Grisham

Asked to suggest goals for the state government, VeneKlasen called for a state environmental policy act, which he felt everyone would support because “we all love the land.” Goldstein said that we need to make sure we are getting the maximum benefit and minimizing the damage.

Lujan Grisham said that the government can empower people by involving communities at the front end. The impact on the community was not considered when the number of wells was allowed to double. Regarding the road problem, she pointed out that the state has been starved for resources; they are \$6 billion behind in four

categories (including schools).

She recommended asking the oil and gas industry to do more to support the state. But she also wants to diversify the economy by building transmission lines, increasing the renewable portfolio standard, exporting solar and wind power.

In response to the question of whether the economy can function without oil and gas, Ogden pointed out that state lands reap \$383 million from oil and gas; they make \$25 million from renewables. She also noted that to sell more wind power, support is needed to construct the transmission lines to carry it from eastern NM to markets in the West.

LWV-CNM Sponsors Forum on APS Bonds

The League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico will sponsor a public forum for anyone interested in learning more about the Albuquerque Public Schools Bond Issue.

The mail-in ballot will consist only of bond issue questions and will involve a property tax increase.

The forum is scheduled for January 8 at 6 p.m. in the KANW studios (2020 Coal Ave. SE) The forum will be broadcast by KANW and live streamed by KNME Public Broadcasting.

Voting Rights

Voting is a fundamental right and all eligible voters should have the equal opportunity to exercise that right. The League of Women Voters is dedicated to ensuring that our elections remain free, fair and accessible.

League Days at the Legislature February 6 and 7, 2019

Garrett's Desert Inn, 311 Old Santa Fe Trail, down the street from the capitol, is offering us a special group rate of \$79 plus \$10 per each additional person (not including tax) for any size room based on availability. Call 1-800-888-2145 or 505-982-1851 to reserve a room. You must reserve your room by January 16 and ask for the League of Women Voters block.

Legislative Reception, Wednesday, February 6, 5:30-7:30 PM Rio Chama Steakhouse, 414 Old Santa Fe Trail

Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver – Voting Rights in the 2019 session

First elected in 2016, Secretary of State Toulouse Oliver is focused on expanding voter access and voting rights, increasing financial disclosure and campaign finance reporting, modernizing the online campaign finance system, and advocating for good government and stronger ethics legislation. Secretary Toulouse Oliver served as Bernalillo County Clerk from 2007 to 2016.

League Day, Thursday, February 7 Committee Hearings at the Roundhouse starting at 8:00 AM

League Table at the Roundhouse all day

Packets of materials will be available at the reception Wednesday evening and at the League table in the East Hall of the Roundhouse on Thursday. Each local League will appoint at least one contact person who will facilitate visits with their legislators. We want to show everyone how to navigate the Roundhouse and make your voice heard at the Legislature.

Education on League Issues - 10:15 AM to Noon Morgan Hall, New Mexico Land Office, 310 Old Santa Fe Trail

Welcome from Stephanie Garcia Richard, State Land Commissioner

Enabling Legislation for the State Ethics Commission - Representative Jim Dines

Dines was the sponsor of HJR8 in 2017, which put creation of a state ethics commission on the 2018 ballot. That ballot question passed with over 75% of the vote. He was also on the working group to craft the enabling legislation. He was a founding member of the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government and the first recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Taxes and Funding for Essential Services - Amber Wallin, Deputy Director, New Mexico Voices for Children

Amber Wallin oversees New Mexico Voices for Children's research and policy work. She also manages the KIDS COUNT program and does policy research on education, tax and budget, hunger, and economic issues. She joined NM Voices in 2012 as a Center on Budget and Policy Priorities Fellow, after which she was a Research and Policy Analyst and later KIDS COUNT Director. Wallin worked at New Mexico State University and the budget department at the city of Las Cruces prior to joining the Voices team.

Local League News

Greater Las Cruces Report

By Kim Sorensen, President LWVGLC

Education Forum: The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces sponsored a forum entitled "School/Community Partnerships; Ensuring All Our Children Succeed," on September 20. Dr. Steven A. Sanchez, LCPS Deputy Superintendent of Instruction & Student Information Systems gave the introduction. League member, Jane Ashe was the moderator. Five experts in education participated as panelists including Lori Martinez, Dr. Betsy Cahill, Dr. Maria Artiaga, Mary Parr Sanchez, and Sylvia Chavez.

Candidate Forums: We sponsored a number of candidate forums in October. Forums co-sponsored with KRWGTV include: Attorney General, Secretary of State, State Auditor, PRC Dist. 5, Public Lands Commissioner, and DAC Sheriff. The League also held a forum on October 3 for candidates from 8 local districts, and a forum on October 4th for county commissioners.

Celebrate Democracy: LWVGLC was proud to participate in the Celebrate Democracy in Dona Ana County Event held October 9. Seven organizations helped organize this event including LWVGLC, the Election Advisory Council, DAC Democrat and Republican Parties, Indivisible LC, Las Cruces Public Schools, and ASNMSU. Co-chairs of the event were League member Erika Graf-Webster, and Indivisible member, Barb Rec-



ords. Over 200 high school students were bused to the County Government Building where they were given a tour, played government trivia games, and spoke with local politicians. Voter registrants were present to register students and, since it was the first day of early voting, those eligible were given the opportunity to cast their ballots.



Mayor's Distinguished Service Award: LWVGLC was proud to witness League member Jane Asche receiving the Mayor's Distinguished Service Award on November 19. Mayor Ken Miyagishima cited many of Jane's contributions in her 20 years of service to the community. The number of people there in support is testimony to her contribution to the community.



Legislative Dinner: Seven state legislators including Micaela Lara Cadena, Ramundo Lara, Angelica Rubio, Joanne Ferrary, Willie Madrid, Jeff Steinborn and Bill Soules attended the Dinner with the Legislators event on December 10. Over 70 members and guests attended. The legislators were given a handout prior to the program outlining the League's priorities. They were then given the opportunity to speak about their priorities (much of which aligned with ours) and respond to questions from the audience.

Los Alamos Report

By Barbara Calef

Well over 100 people attended each of our two candidate forums. The forums were videotaped and made available on YouTube. Our voter guide was published in the *Los Alamos Daily Post* and distributed to every household in the county on October 11. We also put copies in the libraries and senior centers. Second Vice-President Leslie Wallstrom, Secretary Rosmarie Fredrickson, and AAUW member Judy Prono assisted Lynn Jones, our wonderful Director of Voter Services, with the editing.



Photo by Rebecca Shankland

In addition, our county clerk made the voter guide available at the polling places until a voter objected, saying that we were not neutral because on our website we advocated for the constitutional amendment creating the independent ethics commission.

Leslie Wallstrom and Becky Shankland created a "Vicky the Voter" scarecrow urging everyone to vote and displayed her on Central Avenue, with a flock of other scarecrows that contributed to the Halloween festivities.

The midterm election ran smoothly in Los Alamos. We had the highest percent of voter turnout in the state, 72.86%. The statewide turnout was 55.18%. Los Alamos League members Chris Chandler and Stephanie Garcia Richard were elected to NM House District 43 and State Land Commissioner, respectively.

In late November Dick Mason visited Los Alamos to explain the state League's legislative priorities to interested League members, including our new House District 43 representative. We hope to have an active group of advocates during the next session.

In December, inspired by the visit from Dick Mason, we met with one of our state senators, Carlos Cisneros, to explain the League's priorities and to hear his responses. He told us there will be a number of tax reform bills, including one that he is sponsoring. Also, he is sponsoring the Heath Security Act.

A couple of days later we combined the Transfer of Federal Public Land consensus meeting with a holiday potluck, which we enjoyed in front of a cheery fire in the Shanklands' home. Chris Furlanetto braved a winter storm to drive up from Santa Fe and record the comments on the consensus questions.

The speaker at this month's Lunch with a Leader was Ellen Ben-Naim, the Program Manager of First Born in Los Alamos. She told us that there are now about 40 home visiting programs in New Mexico, serving 32 of the state's 33 counties. The program is free and the goal is to offer participation to every new family. Most of the funding is provided through the state's Children, Youth, and Families Department. Currently over 70% of new families in the county enroll.

Central New Mexico Report

By Leah Ingraham and Karen Wentworth, Co-Presidents

The LWV CNM has had an especially busy summer and fall. We developed and printed a 40-page Voter Guide for Bernalillo and Sandoval Counties. We are especially proud that our guide was declared non-partisan by the New Mexico Secretary of State (a Democrat) and was approved by both the Bernalillo and Sandoval County Clerks (Republicans) to be available in the early vote centers. When people walked in to vote, there was a table set up in the entry of the centers where people could pick up copies of the guides and review them before they actually voted. Fifty thousand copies of the guide were printed and this required a significant distribution effort.

In addition, the CNM League undertook an extensive voter registration effort at Roadrunner Food Bank and at local food pantries. A different group of voter registrars work with high school classes where teachers requested registrars. We were so pleased with this effort, we may expand it to become a more systematic effort in the local high schools.

Our office was staffed daily in the weeks leading up to the election and our office volunteers answered hundreds of questions from voters confused about everything from where to vote to how to turn in their absentee ballots.

Over the last few months CNM has heard speakers on the following topics:

Analysis of the state election – Joe Monahan, blogger



Blogger Joe Monahan addressing the League in Albuquerque. He gave his analysis of the NM General Election results.

Environmental issues in the Albuquerque area – Doug Meiklejohn, founder of NM Environmental Law Center
 Election security – Sen. Daniel Ivey-Soto
 Dark Money in Politics - Marjorie Childers, New Mexico in Depth
 Electric Power in New Mexico – Cynthia Hall, NM Public Regulation Commissioner
 Current Issues for Common Cause – Heather Ferguson
 Crime in New Mexico – John Anderson, U.S. Attorney for NM
 Presentation by Karen Douglas on Spent Nuclear Fuel

We also held a Women’s Equality Day Rally in Tiguex Park in August.

We are currently reworking our website and have just begun work on the 2019 edition of Who’s Who, a guide to contacting all our local and state officials.

We are also putting together web information for a special Albuquerque Public Schools mail-in bond election scheduled for February and hope to hold a public forum on the bond questions in January.

Santa Fe County Report

By Laura Atkins, Representative



LWVSFC had an active fall program.

November 2, tour of Mesa Prieta Petroglyphs: Organized by LWVSCF board member Donna Reynolds for League members and friends

November 10, Forum on New Mexico’s National Popular Vote bill: This public forum was hosted by LWVSFC just four days after the 2018 midterm election and moderated by LWVSFC Communications Director Donna Reynolds. It drew an audience of 120 highly engaged League members and the general public.

Keynote speaker Senator Mimi Stewart, New Mexico’s longtime legislative champion of the National Popular Vote, explained the disadvantages of the current “winner-take-all” state laws that govern how the popular votes are count-

ed in presidential elections and in the process divide the country into "battleground" and "spectator" states.

“One of the things that people don’t understand,” Senator Stewart suggested, “is the impact of having only six to twelve states matter” in electing the winner of the highest office in the land. Senator Nancy Rodriguez underscored Senator Stewart’s point by noting that a full 75 percent of U.S. states are rendered politically irrelevant as a result of the present practice.

In her remarks, Senator Liz Stefanics reported that she has been receiving “a ton of emails” in support of the National Popular Vote from across the six counties in her district.

Senate Majority Leader Peter Wirth enthusiastically stated that “this is the year to make it (the National Popular Vote) happen” and encouraged attendees to “pack those committee rooms.” Two additional speakers—University of New Mexico political science professor Lonna Atkeson and Connecticut grassroots organizer Jonathan Perloe—rounded out the program.

November 13, Consensus meeting on the LWVNM Transfer of Federal Public Lands: LWVSFC reached consensus on the questions posed by the study committee.

November 14, meeting to prepare for the upcoming legislative session: Dick Mason met with LWVSFC members on November 14 to discuss League priorities. Eighteen members attended.

Other news:

Membership: We have 169 members as of this week. About half still need to renew their membership.

Voter Services: Voter registration totals for the pre-election period: 439 individuals were registered to vote, 250 of them high school students. We held candidate forums on September 18 for State Rep. District 50 and on October 3 for Sec. of State and Land Commissioner (with LWVNM) and October 19 for U.S. Representative District 3 (with LWVNM) and published our voter guide in the *Santa Fe New Mexican*.





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Please consider helping your local League or LWVNM to pay for our voter guides and candidate forums. You can send a tax-deductible gift by check to your local League or to LWVNM. See www.lwvnm.org for more information and links to our local Leagues. Thank you for making democracy work!

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that helps the public play an informed and active role in government. At the local, state, regional and national levels, the League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Anyone 16 years of age or older, male or female, may become a member. The League of Women Voters never endorses candidates for office or supports political parties.