



# UPDATE

**League of Women Voters of Los Alamos**

**P. O. Box 158, Los Alamos, NM 87544**

**Website: [www.lwvlosalamos.org](http://www.lwvlosalamos.org)**

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## ***Calendar***

- January 21 Lunch with a Leader, Don Machen and Philo Shelton, Mesa Library, 11:40 a.m.
- January 23 Board Meeting, 1372 47<sup>th</sup> St., noon
- January 27 Legislative Reception, Garrett's Desert Inn, 5:30-7:30 p.m.
- January 28 League Day, Roundhouse and State Land Office, ~8 a.m-3 p.m.
- February 11 Program Planning, 605 Totavi St., 7-9 p.m.
- February 18 Lunch with a Leader, JoAnn Johnson, Mesa Library, 11:40 a.m.

## ***Lunch with a Leader January 21: Machen and Shelton***

Lunch with a Leader will be THIS Tuesday, Jan. 21. We will be hearing from Don Machen and LAC Director of Public Works Philo Shelton about the proposed Environmental Sustainability Plan.

We have a busy next two months for our monthly program. In February, the County Assessor, JoAnn Johnson, and Joaquin Valdez from the Assessor's office will be our speakers. Haven't you always wanted to know how your taxes are determined? This and other information will be shared with you on Tuesday February 18.

In March, always the third Tuesday, we have the honor of hearing Richard Sayre, who will talk with us about genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in the food system. The national League of Women Voters has been conducting a study of agriculture that we, the local League, are following. The study committee has written over 20 papers on various aspects of the subject! (You can find them at <http://www.lwv.org/member-resources/agriculture-update>) You will not want to miss this speaker!

*Karyl Ann Armbruster*

## **League Days at the Legislature, 2014**

There is no need to pre-register this year. Packets of materials will be available at the Reception Monday evening at Garrett's Desert Inn and on Tuesday morning in Morgan Hall at the State Land Office.

## **Legislative Reception Preceding League Day, January 27**

Once again the LWVNM will hold a reception to which all League members and legislators are invited. The Legislative Reception will be held on Monday, January 27 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Garrett's Desert Inn, 311 Old Santa Fe Trail. Parking is free for this event. There will be a panel discussion on **Tax Fairness in New Mexico League's Budget Priority: Making NM's Tax System More Progressive**

The panelists will be: Senator Peter Wirth, District 25, Santa Fe; Richard Anklam, Executive Director/President New Mexico Tax Research Institute; and Bill Jordan, Policy Director, New Mexico Voices for Children.

## **League Day at the Legislature, January 28**

League Day will be held the following day, Tuesday, January 28. There will be committee hearings at the Roundhouse from 8 a.m. on. See the schedule in your packet. Or, you can see the documentary **Inequality for All** from 8:30-10 a.m. at the NM Land Office, Morgan Hall, 310 Old Santa Fe Trail

**10:30 a.m. – Noon in Morgan Hall - League Day Talks:**

### **Voting, Campaign, & Ethics Legislation**

Viki Harrison, Executive Director,  
Common Cause NM

### **New Mexico's Behavioral Health Crisis**

Linda Siegle, National Association of  
Social Workers, NM Chapter

**If you wish to carpool to either event, contact Barbara Calef at [bfcalef\(AT\)gmail\(DOT\)com](mailto:bfcalef(AT)gmail(DOT)com) or 662-3825.**

## **Legislative Priorities**

The League opposes the regressive tax policies and loopholes from recent years that have reduced the availability of funds for essential programs. We'll be supporting a number of tax proposals aimed at making New Mexico's tax structure more progressive. Other League priorities for this session include education, behavioral health, health care funding and policies, driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants, and environmental protection.

*Barbara Calef*

## **Report on the Legislative Preview**

The 2014 Legislative Preview was well attended and, for the first time, was covered by both the Monitor and the Los Alamos Daily Post; both published extensive articles about the event.

Helena Whyte was the moderator. Katherine Wang and Emma Lathrop, members of the high school's Hilltalkers debate team, assisted. All three of our legislators participated.

Education was a major theme for the evening. Representative Stephanie Garcia Richard announced that the Land Grant Permanent Fund has an increase of \$100 million in revenue this year. The Governor is proposing to increase funding for education by 3%, but the legislators support greater increases.

Garcia Richard will sponsor a constitutional amendment to limit class size to 18 for grades K-3. Another constitutional amendment would return the power currently in the hands of the Secretary of Public Education (appointed by the Governor) to the elected state Board of Education. Constitutional amendments do not require approval by the Governor. If passed, they will be put on the ballot for the November election.

Other initiatives favored by Garcia Richard are to take an additional 0.5% off interest of the Land Grant Fund for early childhood education and to fix the State Lottery Scholarship Fund, which otherwise will be insolvent.

The Martinez Administration's plan to tie increased teachers' salaries to student test scores was criticized by LAPS Assistant Superintendent Gerry Washburn, who pointed out that it would give teachers an incentive to focus on the high achieving students. Both Washburn and Senator Richard Martinez expressed concern about the Governor's proposal to retain third grade students who cannot read at grade level, citing poverty and developmental differences as important considerations.

Senator Carlos Cisneros listed many other critical needs for increased funding in New Mexico including higher education, transportation, and salaries for the state police.

There will be less money this year from the federal government and much of the budget goes to financing the debt; nevertheless, legislators will not ask for a tax increase because the governor would veto it.

Kristina Fisher explained the three bills that Think New Mexico is supporting this year in an effort to create new jobs in the state. SB 8 would offer scholarships in an effort to increase the number of international students attending state universities. Studies show that many foreign students remain in the state and create new businesses. SB 9 would streamline the administrative burdens for new businesses and SB 10 offers a post-performance incentive to new businesses, illustrated by the quote, "We don't give you a dime until we get a dollar." Senator Martinez announced that Chris Chandler will be working in his office during the session. Senator Cisneros reminded the audience that he and the other legislators welcome visits from constituents. The legislators are rarely to be found in their offices, but can be summoned from the floor of the House or Senate by the sergeant at arms.

*Barbara Calef*

## **Report of December LWL: Robert Westervelt**

The Department of Public Utilities (DPU) has installed “smart meters” in hundreds of homes during the past year. Smart meter research can give customers knowledge of their specific consumption patterns, enabling them to make informed decisions about their usage. Robert Westervelt, Deputy Utilities Manager of Finance and Administration, explained the three programs involving the new meters during Lunch with a Leader. NEDO, the Japanese consortium that paid for the installation of the solar array on the landfill, is investigating how to change the electrical consumption habits of Americans. They chose Los Alamos County as their laboratory because our housing is representative of mainstream America. Utilities are especially interested now in altering the habits of consumers in response to the changes in power sources. Wholesale electricity prices already fluctuate during the day and during different seasons, but currently DPU charges its customers a uniform rate. The addition of intermittent renewable energy sources increases the fluctuations in availability and in price.

The smart meters enable people to be more aware of their patterns and quantity of energy consumption. They keep all the data in a memory, which is down-loaded every month and studied by researchers in Japan. For the 100-meter program, available to residents in Los Alamos and White Rock, smart meters with in-home displays were installed and participants periodically report their daily activities by categories at 15-minute intervals over a two-day period.

The Mesa Smart Meter Study was intended to encompass 1600 smart meters to be installed in homes on North and Barranca Mesas for an

exploration of how participants respond to variable pricing during peak times of electric use. Actually 900 households are involved, including a control group of 174. The researchers are trying to determine whether it is more effective to use the carrot or the stick to influence consumers to conserve energy during periods of high demand or when there are constraints on the grid. Another question is how large does the pricing incentive have to be. Participants are sent alert messages to notify them of an “event” during which there will be a change in the price of electricity or a rebate offered for energy saved. Following the event, they receive a notice of their performance. There may be up to 15 events during one season.

One program, called Critical Peak Pricing, provides disincentives. During non-peak time customers receive a discount on usage. On designated days they receive the discount, but during peak hours on those days, they are charged a surplus. There are 550 participants.

The second program, Peak Time Rebate, rewards the 178 participants for using less electricity during the demand response event than their pre-determined baseline average. Participants can look at the meter to learn their power consumption, but they do not know their baseline. Westervelt says that the program is hard to administer and that it is easier to understand and respond to the Critical Peak Pricing program.

There will be a report on the 100 smart meter study in April. DPU may eventually expand the program to include all homes in the County. More information is available at [www.losalamosnm.us/utilities/pages/smartmeters.aspx](http://www.losalamosnm.us/utilities/pages/smartmeters.aspx)

*Barbara Calef*

## **Program Planning Meeting**

Every winter local League members get together to discuss our goals for the following year, which begins with the Annual Meeting in April.

On Tuesday, February 11, from 7 to 9 p.m., all members are invited to gather at Karyl Ann Armbruster's house at 605 Totavi St. on Barranca Mesa for an evening of program planning. We will consider if there are local issues we should address based on our League's current positions (on our website at <http://lwwlosalamos.org>), whether we need to update our positions, or whether there are other studies to be undertaken.

In addition, we will discuss possible studies and/or updates on national issues in preparation for the LWVUS Convention in June. I will send out a list of recommendations from other Leagues before the meeting. Bring your ideas and join the conversation! If you wish to carpool, contact Barbara Calef at 662-3825 or [bfcalef\(AT\)gmail\(DOT\)com](mailto:bfcalef(AT)gmail(DOT)com).

*Barbara Calef*

## **Ban the Bag**

On January 15 the Sierra Club invited the community to join in an effort to educate the public about the impact of single use plastic bags on the environment. The League of Women Voters supports the ban based on our sustainability position. The group organized to begin the campaign with the goal of convincing Council to pass an ordinance later this year. If you are interested in participating, come to the next meeting at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 12 in Room 220 at UNMLA.

## **Observer Corps Report – January 2014**

County Council had a busy session on December 17<sup>th</sup> of 2013.

The Los Alamos Traffic and Vehicle code needed to be updated since it was substantially the same as in 1995, and many changes were needed to bring it in alignment with state laws. Most of us are unlikely to notice the changes unless we do things like obstruct traffic or speed in a construction or safety zone, in which case many fees have been raised or even doubled.

Council also voted to accept the new Electric Rate Schedules proposed by the Department of Public Utilities. This rate increase of about 8 percent across-the-board had been budgeted for this entire fiscal year during last May's budget sessions. However, they were able to hold off until the last half of the year before requesting the actual increase. DPU is now anticipating large and previously unexpected capital projects and expenditures over the next ten years, and they need to position themselves to cover them.

And that same evening, Council unanimously approved the agreement with Bradbury Stamm for the design-build of the White Rock Library and a remodel of the Pinon Park Youth Activity Center for the amount of \$4,342,205. The new library will be located at Pinon Park, and its size will be 10,500 square feet (it is currently 4,000 square feet). There will be a public process regarding the design of the library, so watch for these meetings. They plan to break ground this summer and complete the library in June of 2015.

At the first council meeting of 2014 on January 7<sup>th</sup>, Council voted to keep Councilor Geoff Rodgers as Council Chair and voted in Councilor Kristin Henderson as Vice-Chair.

Staff proposed a new Nuisance Code for the county. There was considerable discussion and concern about the new code, but councilors felt that staff needed the ability to force compliance in cases of blatant disregard for safety and community standards that impact-neighborhoods and property values. The new code revisions passed with minor revisions by a vote of 7 to 0.

*Lynn Jones*



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LOS ALAMOS
MEMBERSHIP FORM

Mail to: LWV Los Alamos
P.O. Box 158
Los Alamos, NM 87544

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if you are willing to receive our local newsletter Update as an electronic file, saving us postage.

Check here if you wish to receive friendly reminders of upcoming events by e-mail.

Membership Categories

Single membership: \$45

Household membership (two+ people at the same address): \$65

Single Sustaining membership: \$75

Household Sustaining membership (two+ people at the same address): \$95

Note: Membership checks should be payable to LWV-Los Alamos

Additional ways to support the local League

Unrestricted contribution (not tax deductible): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

LWV Education Fund (tax deductible): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Checks for tax-deductible contributions must be payable to LWVLA Ed. Fund and not combined with any other payments.

Interests (check as many as apply)

- One-time activities (unit meetings, fund-drive mailings, etc.)
Affordable Housing
Election Reform
Fuller Lodge
Land Use
Local Government
Medically Indigent Fund
Public Transportation
Sustainability
Water Issues
Not sure (I just support LWV)

Other (please suggest) \_\_\_\_\_

*The League of Women Voters, 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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