



# UPDATE

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

**League of Women Voters of Los Alamos**

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

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

Volume 71, Number 4  
August 2018

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## Calendar

- August 27      Voices of Los Alamos, Jeannie Allen, [results.org](http://results.org) (movement to end poverty),  
Unitarian Church, 6:30 p.m.
- August 28      Board meeting, White Rock Library, noon
- August 30      RBG movie screening at the Reel Deal Theater, 4 p.m.
- September 6    Forum on Early Childhood Education, Graves Hall of the United Church, 7 p.m.  
(6:30 for refreshments)
- September 18   Lunch with a Leader, Dina Pesenson, Stephanie Nakhleh, Bicycle Flow Trail,  
Graves Hall of the United Church, 11:45 a.m.
- September 20   DC Statehood meeting, 5 p.m., 6 Mariposa Court, White Rock
- September 24   Voices of Los Alamos, Ute Haker, National Popular Vote, Unitarian Church, 6:30 p.m.
- September 25   Board meeting, White Rock Library, noon
- September 27   Candidate Forum, UNM/LA, 7 p.m. (6:30 for refreshments)
- October 3        Candidate Forum, UNM/LA, 7 p.m. (6:30 for refreshments)

## ***Lunch with a Leader: Dina Pesenson and the Flow Trail***

On September 18, Los Alamos resident Dina Pesenson will give us a brief update on the Los Alamos County



*Photo of Dina Pesenson courtesy of [LinkedIn](#).*

(LAC) herbicide spraying scheduled for October. Then Stephanie Nakhleh, Chair of the Parks and Recreation Board, and either Brian Brogan (Community Services Director) or LAC Open Space Specialist Eric Peterson will explain the options for

the bicycle flow trail. This is quite controversial, so I am sure you will want to hear about the planning proposal.

*Karyl Ann Armbruster*

## ***Co-President's Message: Early Childhood Education—the Key to Raising New Mexico's Ranking***

According to the annual Kids Count study run by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, New Mexico ranks last

in child well-being. The study measures child poverty, child health, and child families, but the statistic that everyone is talking about now is child education. New Mexico ranks 50<sup>th</sup> because of young children (ages three to four) not in school (57%), 4<sup>th</sup> graders not proficient in reading (75%), 8<sup>th</sup> graders not proficient in math (75%), and high schoolers not graduating on time (29%).

Statistics show that early childhood education can impact all these later deficiencies. George Cowan, a founder of Los Alamos National Bank and the Santa Fe Institute and donor of the early childhood play area at PEEC, believed that the early years were the most important years for all children. He funded First Born, a program of home visiting to help first-time parents with support, services, and education.

Join the League of Women Voters, AAUW, and Searchlight NM on September 6 at 7 p.m. (6:30 for refreshments) in Graves Hall of the United Church to hear Charles Sallee, Deputy Director of the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee. He will speak to the need for better implementation and oversight of such early childhood programs as PreK and Headstart. His talk will be followed by an audience Q&A and small discussion groups.

The evening will be moderated by Searchlight, a nonpartisan, nonprofit investigative news organization that has devoted the last year to writing exclusively about child well-being in New Mexico.

All are welcome to join us in discussing this crucial issue for New Mexico, as well as enjoying refreshments.

*Rebecca Shankland*

## ***Come Discuss DC Statehood at a September 20 Party***

Yilin Zhang will be in New Mexico on September 20 at the home of Becky Shankland, 6 Mariposa Ct., White Rock, at 5 p.m. for drinks and nibbles. Ms. Zhang is coming from Washington, DC, to talk about the issue of statehood for Washington, DC. This has

been a hot topic since 2016 when DC citizens voted to petition Congress for statehood.

Can DC citizens vote for president?

Do DC citizens pay taxes?

Do DC citizens have representation in Congress?

What would a state of Washington DC look like?

Yilin will answer these and many other intriguing questions about the movement to grant statehood to the residential and commercial parts of DC.

For further information, visit [lwvdc.org](http://lwvdc.org) and click on DC Statehood Toolkit (at the bottom of the page).

After Yilin's presentation, those who want to continue the conversation and socialize are invited to dinner (at their own expense) at 7 p.m. at Pig + Fig in White Rock. For purposes of planning the event and making a dinner reservation, please let the hostess know at [rebecca.shankland\(AT\)gmail\(DOT\)com](mailto:rebecca.shankland(AT)gmail(DOT)com). Non-League members are welcome, as are last-minute attendees.

*Rebecca Shankland*

## ***August Lunch with a Leader: Robert Rhatigan and the Census***

Following the LWVUS Convention in Chicago in June, some of the delegates from New Mexico gathered to discuss the importance of an accurate census in 2020 and how the League could help to increase participation. To help us understand why demographers are concerned about an undercount, we invited Robert Rhatigan to speak at Lunch with a Leader.

Robert Rhatigan is the Associate Director and Senior Research Scientist for the Geospatial and Population Studies Group (GPS) at UNM. GPS contains two research groups—the Population Studies Group and the Traffic Safety Research Unit. It is a non-academic department dependent on grants from the state government. Rhatigan is the de facto state demographer (there is no official position), and member of a cooperative of state demographers. He is New Mexico's liaison to the US Census Bureau.

The Census Bureau produces a population estimate every year, but the decennial census “hits the re-set button.” Over the last five to six decades the census has been improved each time. In the 2000 census the undercount in New Mexico was estimated at 2%. In 2010 there was no undercount due to the success of the newly created Population Studies Group in producing an improved address list. Furthermore, there was a high unemployment rate due to the recession, which meant that it was easy to hire people to perform the necessary tasks. And the federal government funded a stimulus package that included money for census outreach.

In preparation for the 2020 census Rhatigan was granted access to the Census Bureau’s list of New Mexico addresses and was able to update it, focusing on addresses in rural areas, which tend to be the least accurate. But, because the unemployment rate has now dropped and no stimulus package has been approved, the outlook for the 2020 census is not good.

The Census Bureau has lacked a director for a year and a half. Most of the “nuts and bolts” are managed by the deputy director, but that office has been vacant for two years. Rhatigan said that the civil servants at the bureau are competent, but they lack authority. When Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross decided to add a citizenship question to the census form, the civil servants told Ross the question was a terrible idea, especially because it was untested, but they could not refuse. New York and other states (including New Mexico) are suing, but the de facto deadline for a decision is October 1, 2019, when the Census Bureau must begin printing the forms.

University policy prohibits lobbying by the departments, but Rhatigan is permitted to voice his concerns. He noted that a 1% undercount in 2020 will mean 20,000 people not counted, resulting in a \$60 million loss to the state, or \$600 million over 10 years.

Unlike some states, New Mexico is not at risk of losing a congressional delegate, but an

undercount will be unfair to the communities involved when redistricting occurs in 2021. The census is the foundation of everything with a population component. An undercount will stymie economic development; for instance, national companies look at the demographics to decide where to put new stores.

New Mexico receives \$6.2 billion a year from the federal government, or \$3,000 for every New Mexican. Of that, \$4.1 billion is for Medicaid reimbursement. (The state receives 65% of the costs.) Other programs that distribute funds on the basis of the census include the Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Programs (SNAP), highway planning and construction, Medicare Part B, Title 1 grants to local education agencies, the National School Lunch Program, and many others. Programs within the state government also distribute funds based on the census.

The sequence for the census in 2020 is:

1. Prior to March 23 every residential address receives a postcard notice with a unique identifier.
2. On April 1 every residential address receives a postcard with instructions for registering online. About 65-70% of households are expected to do so.
3. On April 8 the remaining 30-35% of households will receive a paper questionnaire or a call.
4. On April 15 the remaining 20% will require a follow-up call or visit.

In 2010 each unresponsive residence was visited up to six times (knocks on the door) in an effort to obtain the census form. Rhatigan said he does not know how many knocks will be made this time. He is also concerned about the ability of the Census Bureau to handle all the online traffic in April.

The census information remains confidential for 65 years, protected by federal law. But the citizenship question will depress participation. Rhatigan said that federal law requires filling out the entire form,



*Photo of Robert Rhatigan courtesy of [UNM](#).*

but it has never been enforced; the Census Bureau has no means of enforcement.

The people most at risk of not being counted are the Native Americans living in tribal areas. The next most undercounted are Native Americans not living on tribal lands. Rhatigan has no idea how many young children fail to be counted, but statistics from earlier years show that they are always undercounted. He has been in contact with the 22 tribes in the state and said that some of them have excellent data. The largest tribe, the Navajo Nation, is trying to improve their data, but has no funding.

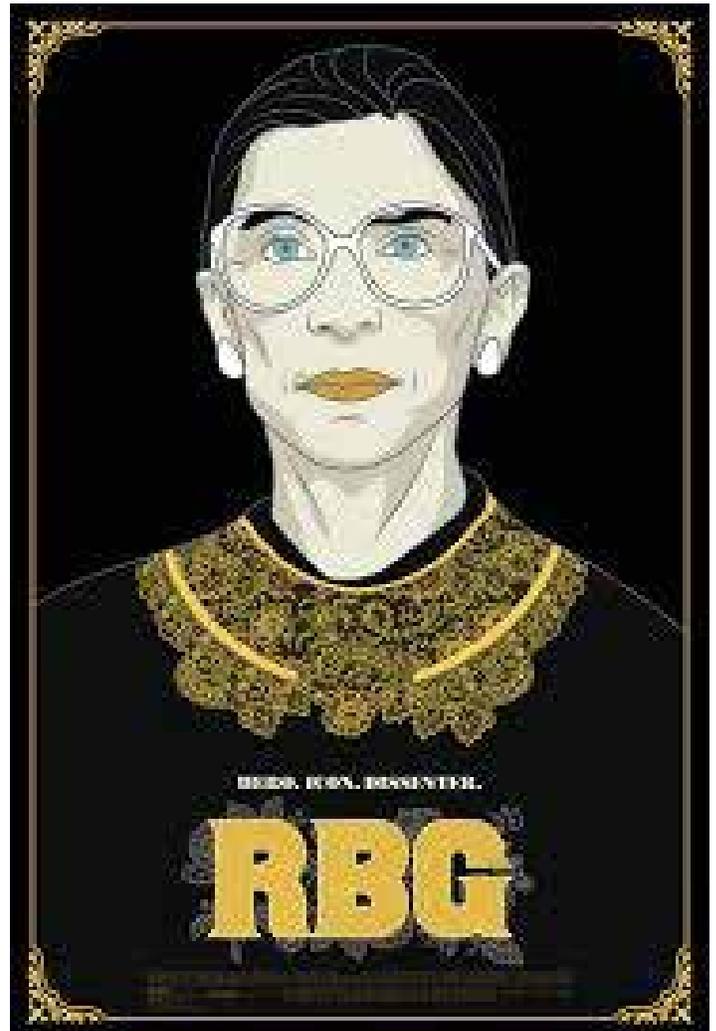
Of course, a major problem in rural areas is the lack of access to the internet. Rhatigan said that Gar Clark at the Department of Information Technology New Mexico Broadband Program knows where broadband is lacking and plans to establish mobile response stations. The Census Bureau should pay for that effort, he commented.

It is vital that every New Mexican understands the importance of the census. The Census Bureau is enlisting social media to spread the word, but we cannot depend on the federal government to act alone. They are offering guidance and documentation (no funds) for outreach. Rhatigan wants Complete Count Committees at every level of the government as well as citizen groups. The committees can contact informal leaders who are trusted in rural communities to get the message across.

Governor Martinez needs to sign an executive order to establish a Complete Count Committee so that the legislature will provide funding during the 2019 session. So far we have a good start; \$2 million has been made available. Needed are elected officials, state representatives, school districts, institutions of higher education, business leaders, faith leaders, and nonprofits that serve the immigrant community.

The decennial census is the largest civilian governmental undertaking in the United States.

*Barbara Calef*



*See RBG at the Reel Deal Theater on Aug. 30th.  
Image courtesy of [IMDB](https://www.imdb.com).*

## ***RBG Comes to Los Alamos: Thursday, August 30 at 4 P.M.***

The wonderful new documentary *RBG* about the life of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg is coming to the Reel Deal Theater this weekend for one or two weeks. Jim O'Donnell, manager of the theater, has offered the American Association of University Women (AAUW) a free showing, open to the public, at which all entrance fees will be given to AAUW's Legal Advocacy Fund. This very special showing is Thursday, August 30 at 4 p.m.

The Legal Advocacy Fund (LAF) is the arm of AAUW that provides financial aid and legal advice to women seeking legal redress for sexual discrimination in higher education and the workplace. Major cases supported over the years by LAF include unequal pay,

pregnancy discrimination, denial of tenure, sexual harassment, violations of Title IX, and more.

You can support this wonderful cause by attending the movie and/or by writing a tax-deductible check to AAUW-LAF. We will be at the showing to share literature, answer questions, and accept your checks. In this time of uncertainty, this is one of the best ways to keep and improve the rights that RBG fought so hard to give American women.

I have seen the movie and it is excellent, both informative and entertaining.

*Nina Thayer, AAUW-Los Alamos*

## **Observer Corps Reports**

### **County Council**

At the July 31 County Council meeting, there was considerable public comment from residents objecting to the bicycle flow trail that seems destined for Bayo Canyon. Primarily equestrians objected to the only canyon they have access to becoming off-limits by virtue of risks to the safety of riders, but dog walkers and hikers also objected. That is a popular canyon for residents of all kinds. The flow trail down Bayo Canyon is not a done deal, and there will be more opportunity for citizen input.

That same evening, council approved a ballot measure for the fall election in which the citizens are asked to renew the gross receipts tax that currently funds a large part of the North Central Regional Transit District. This also funds in part our Atomic City Transit operations.

The council also approved an Animal Shelter Ad Hoc Advisory Committee to help the county determine the way forward to improving the Animal Shelter and its operations. It appears there will be many residents interested in participating on this committee.

At the August 7 meeting, County Manager Harry Burgess reported that for several months aggressive feral cows have been in the Guaje Pines Cemetery. The NM Livestock Board was contacted and said

that the county needed to round up the cows. County employees were able to contain the cows and the Livestock Board picked them up. Mr. Burgess explained that Los Alamos County employees are looking into how to better secure the cemetery from bovine entry.

*Lynn Jones and Becky Oertel*

### **Board of Public Utilities**

The Board of Public Utilities (BPU) met on Wednesday, August 15, 2018. Staff updated the BPU on the new utility bills as part of the conversion to the new Munis Enterprise Resource Planning software platform. Some July utility bills were delayed by almost a month.

Therefore, the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) is waiving all late fees until it can get utility bills back on a regular billing schedule. A proposed ordinance to increase sewer rates by eight percent was approved by the BPU. The proposed ordinance will go to the County Council for consideration in late September. Lastly, DPU requested approval to award a contract for the purchase and installation of advanced metering infrastructure. The motion for approval failed due to a lack of a second.

*Julie Williams-Hill*

## **Recycling Questions Answered: An interview with Friedman Recycling's Co-General Manager**

China's decision to [ban post-consumer plastics and 23 other scrap materials](#) has sent ripples through our country and raised many questions about the future of plastics and recycling. To determine how this affects Los Alamos, I spoke with David Friedman, the Co-General Manager of Friedman Recycling Companies.

Before going into the interview, let's answer the

question: “What happens to items in your recycle bin?” After the dump truck picks up recyclables from the blue bins in your neighborhood, they are taken to the Los Alamos EcoStation where they are transferred to a hauling truck. The transport vehicle delivers these items to the Albuquerque multi re-use facility (MRF), which is owned and operated by Friedman Recycling Companies (FRC). There the contents of your bin are sorted and packaged using a variety of mechanisms, including human power. Photos of the facility and more details about the process are available in [Kirsten Laskey’s article in the Los Alamos Daily Post](#). The packaged items are then sold to manufacturers who use them as input materials to make a variety of products.

In order for us to have the luxury of co-mingling our recyclables, placing paper and plastic in the same bin, MRFs have to exist to sort those items and find companies to buy the materials. For them, it is important for us to put the right items into the bin and be sure not to add items that could damage their equipment or stop the assembly line.

What is the worst contaminant for their sorting facility? David Friedman quickly responded, “tangles.” He went on to describe them as “anything long and stringy, including ropes, string, hoses, and flexible plastics such as plastic packaging. They damage the sorters, which are made up of a series of spinning rods.” Tangles, including plastic bags, can get caught around those rods like long hair in a vacuum brush. Friedman also asked that if we are not sure if an item goes in the recycling, to “double check.” Incorrect items are considered contaminants and cost money, time, and energy to remove.

Where do our plastics go? Friedman told me that number one and two plastics are sold to a US manufacturer. Plastics with numbers three through seven were going to China. The other items in our bin are purchased and processed by US manufacturers who are primarily located in the southeastern states.

I asked David Friedman how the China ban is affecting his business. He said it has “flooded the markets so the value of plastics has dropped, though there are still viable markets for the materials.” He also explained that they are stockpiling their #3 to #7 plastics, not sending them to the landfill.

Friedman went on to say, “We are hopeful. Even though it is currently stressful and we are impacted by China’s change, we are still early in the transition. Markets will shift with time, and it may take 12 to 18 months before we find a buyer for the plastics.” But Friedman is not just waiting; they have shipped out samples to domestic manufacturers looking to expand.

His message to us is: “Please keep recycling. We are confident that markets will settle down.” He explained that he is already seeing signs that the markets are adapting. Changes in recycling are easier for MRFs like FRC to handle when we make sure we are putting the correct items in our bin. A list of accepted items is located on the [Los Alamos County’s website](#).

Before concluding our conversation, I asked David Friedman about policies around recycling. He talked about the [Executive Order 13101—Greening the Government Through Waste Prevention, Recycling, and Federal Acquisition](#) signed in 1998 by Bill Clinton, because it directed government facilities to purchase more recyclable and recycled products. Friedman recalled that implementation of the order significantly increased the value of recycled paper as a result of increased demand. Since recycled materials are often lower quality and more expensive to process than raw materials, incentives like these make it much easier for MRFs to find buyers for items we toss in our bins. [George W. Bush revoked Executive Order 13101](#) in 2007, but the interest in recycled paper prevailed.

How does this affect our decisions? Aside from becoming experts on what we can and can’t recycle, reducing our waste is important. Take a look at items in your trash bin, and see how you can prevent accumulating those items in the first place. The phrase “Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle” is still pertinent, in that order.

How to get started? Here are some resources you may find useful:

- [What do recycled materials become?](#) This is a great guide to help you see what types of materials our recyclables can be used to create. However, the glass recycling section does not apply in Los Alamos, since we crush the glass and use it for landscaping and as a substitute for pea gravel in the construction of roads and paved paths.

- [Zero Waste Los Alamos](#)
- [Getting started with zero waste \(video\)](#)
- [Use old cotton clothes to replace plastic wrap \(video\)](#)
- [EPA's guide to reducing waste at home \(pdf\)](#)

*Sandra West*

## **Candidate Forums September 27 and October 3**

Come meet the candidates for County Council at the forum on Thursday, September 27 at UNM-LA at 7 p.m., with refreshments and conversation with the candidates at 6:30 p.m. Our probate judge, who is unopposed, will also attend and we will have a speaker to explain the ballot question about reauthorizing the gross receipts tax to fund regional transit.

The second candidate forum will be at UNM-LA, too. On Wednesday, October 3 (same schedule as for the previous forum), the candidates for NM House District 43, magistrate judge, municipal judge, and sheriff will participate as well as the County Assessor, who is unopposed.

## **Meetings of Voices of Los Alamos**

Voices of Los Alamos meets on the fourth Monday of every month. On August 27 they will meet from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Church, 1738 N. Sage Loop. The speaker will be Jeannie Allen from [results.org](#). Results is a nonpartisan movement of passionate, everyday people who use their voices to influence political decisions that will bring an end to poverty.

Volunteers receive training, support, and inspiration to become skilled advocates. A small Results staff in Washington, DC, provide the background research and determines a focus for each month, guiding volunteers to effectively advise policy makers on decisions that improve access to education, health, and economic opportunity.

On September 24, the speaker will be Ute Haker from National Popular Vote.

*Barbara Calef*

## **Welcome, New Members**

**Dawn C. Trujillo Voss** joined the League in June. She grew up in Española and Chimayo, is married to Mark Voss, and has two daughters, Mykayla and Malia. Mykayla has just graduated from Los Alamos High School and will be attending New Mexico State University to study environmental science and photography. Malia will be a freshman LAHS.

Dawn works for LANL on a Performance Assurance team with Safeguards and Security. She recently completed a B.S. in Project Management while working full-time and managing her family. She wants her daughters to know that anything is possible with a little determination, sacrifice, and good old grit.

This spring she decided to run for the Los Alamos County Council election. She is happy to be a new member of the League of Women Voters and is also excited to see where this part of her path leads her.

**Wendy Swanson** joined the League in June. She has been very active in making Los Alamos more walkable. Her husband, Randy Ryti, is a candidate for County Council.

**Nona Girardi** and **Howard Barnum** re-joined the League in June. They have been away from Los Alamos for some time and we welcome their return.

**Margie Stockton** joined the League in July.

**Becky Oertel** joined the League in August. She is a former board member of PEEC, who directed the creation of the outdoor exhibits. She went on the Women's March in Washington in January of 2017. She has volunteered to report on County Council issues of interest for both Voices of Los Alamos and the League.

## **Farewell, Michael McKay and George Baker**

**Michael McKay**, long-time member of our League, died this month of injuries from an accident in his backyard. Michael served on our Nominating Committee for many years. He participated in the Water Study Committee, which led to the adoption of the LWVLA position on Sustainable Water. He was especially supportive of our position on Public Transportation and constantly encouraged all of us to use the Atomic City Bus more often. We will miss seeing him at Lunch with a Leader and the Annual Meeting.

**George Baker**, Carroll Thomas's husband, died on July 24, 2018. George had been a League member and attendee for some years before his illness. We send Carroll our sympathy.

## **LWVLA Board of Directors**

Officers:

- Co-Presidents: Barbara Calef and Rebecca Shankland
- 1st Vice President: *unfilled*
- 2nd Vice President: Leslie Wallstrom

- Treasurer: Kathleen Taylor
- Secretary: Rosmarie Frederickson

Directors:

- Reservations: Amy Birnbaum
- Lunch with a Leader: Karyl Ann Armbruster
- Director-at-Large: Ellen Mills
- Director-at-Large: Akkana Peck
- Webmaster and Social Media: Julie Williams-Hill
- Newsletter: Sandra West
- Publicity: Jody Benson
- Voter Services: Lynn Jones

Off Board Directors:

- Arrangements: *unfilled*
- Fundraising: *unfilled*
- Membership: Rebecca Shankland
- Nominating Committee: *unfilled*
- County Council Observer: Lynn Jones and Becky Oertel
- BPU Observer: Julie Williams-Hill

If you would like to learn more about any of these positions, please complete and submit the membership form on page nine.



*Board of Directors photo taken on April 17, 2018 by Jean Dewart: (top row, left to right) Amy Birnbaum, Sandra West, Karyl Ann Armbruster, Ellen Mills, Akkana Peck, Julie Williams-Hill, (bottom row, left to right) Lynn Jones, Rebecca Shankland, Barbara Calef, and Leslie Wallstrom.*



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LOS ALAMOS

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

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

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

Phone(s): \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

- Check here to receive our local newsletter Update as an electronic file, saving us postage
OR Check here if you prefer the newsletter mailed in hard copy.
Check here if you wish to receive occasional—friendly reminders of upcoming events by e-mail.

Membership Categories (All checks for memberships and contributions should be payable to LWV-Los Alamos and all are now tax-deductible.)

- 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
Contribution: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Interests and Ways to Help the League (check as many as apply)

- Topics of Interest: Affordable Housing, Local Government, Education, Elections, Voting Rights, Water Issues, Land Use, Health Care, Money in Politics, Sustainability, Living Wage, Public Transportation, Environment, Other topics (please suggest):
Ways to Help with League Activities: Set up Refreshments at Forums, Observer Corps (County Council, DPU, etc.), Nominating Committee, Voter Guides Committee, Voter Registration, Publicity, Website, Social Media, Newsletter, Membership, Fund-raising, Budget Committee for LWV, Lunch with a Leader (assistance), Fund-raising Committee for LWV, Participate in board meetings or join the board

*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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