



# UPDATE

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

**League of Women Voters of Los Alamos**

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## **Calendar**

June 5            **Primary Election Day**  
June 19          Lunch with a Leader, Bill Hargraves, Mesa Public Library, 11:45 a.m.  
June 26          Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, noon

### ***Lunch with a Leader: Bill Hargraves***

In June, our Lunch with a Leader program will feature the proposal for a charter school, Polaris. Since this is a new idea for Los Alamos, Bill Hargraves will be explaining why he and his colleagues believe it is important to provide an alternative way of learning and how the charter school will be different from the traditional school. Hargraves is one of a core group of five people who came up with the ideas and have been working diligently to write the application to submit for approval. Charter schools must be authorized by either the local school district or by the state. Community members and teachers have been attending the full-day workshops presented by the Charter School Division of the New Mexico Public Education Department.

*Karyl Ann Armbruster*

### ***Co-President's Message: Voting Advice from the Pros***

Over four days of class reunion and commencement events in Cambridge, we were treated to a brilliant array of talks. A major theme was voting. Here are a few samples.

John Lewis: Voting is the most important non-violent tool we have available to save and rescue America. Women, elementary students, high school students, and college students will lead us in this non-violent movement.

Hillary Clinton: As the Parkland students advise, "Make gun issues your priority, a single issue." Or if you have another passion, focus on it: defend higher education; defend open inquiry; defend the press (though she admitted that it's hard for her to say this); subscribe to real newspapers; vote in every election.

Michelle Flournoy: Because Putin is trying to rebuild the Russian sphere of influence by adopting the old KGB playbook, we must work hard to keep Russian

meddling out of the 2018 elections. To counter Putin's attempted attacks, we must maintain our NATO support and clarify the costs of Russian meddling to our electoral system. We are not really prepared to ascertain the integrity of our elections because each state controls its own elections with varying degrees of security. Flournoy emphasized the need for ballots to always have a paper trail to assure legitimate recounts [as the League has long maintained].

Danielle Allen: Her talk on "Democracy and Education" gave remarkable insight into past and present.

- The Founding Fathers believed that education was necessary for an informed citizenry, yet it's not enshrined in the Constitution as a right. But ALL state constitutions do so. Originally the motive was for citizenship (informed voting); now it's also for economic opportunity (jobs).
- Thomas Piketty's graph of income inequality shows a great disparity in the early 20th century, then a leveling after World War II, then an explosion of inequality from 1980 onward. One cause is a link between income and education, where tech incomes vastly outweigh incomes of non-educated people.
- The current emphasis on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education has led to a decrease in time and testing on social studies and civics.
- A recent study shows that the more immersion in STEM education, the less is the likelihood of voting.
- If we wish to create a more egalitarian society, we need more emphasis on social studies education, not just STEM.
- Two questions for education: 1. How can STEM education be more egalitarian? 2. How can we better teach civics?
- The poor and uneducated are diminishing as voters: poor whites are dying earlier; black men are incarcerated. (Another statistic: incarceration rates track income inequality.) So who's left to vote?
- We have an imperative need to counter voter suppression: Allen recommended joining the League of Women Voters and other groups that are focused on this effort.

- In response to a question about more egalitarian voting systems, Allen suggested Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) and multi-person representative districts. (See the Fair Representation Act now in Congress.)
- A question from the audience: How can better education be funded? Allen's answer: spend less on athletics and prisons.

The thread running through these talks was the paramount importance of voting as a counter to injustice and tyranny. Many mechanisms for guaranteeing fair elections are supported by the League, so we must continue our efforts.

Words of Wisdom about Journalism: The graduation speakers spoke eloquently about the current state of journalism. Some notable comments:

- In 2001, there were 800,000 journalists.
- In 2017, there were 140,000 journalists.
- We're experiencing the collapse of the traditional business model for news. Local reporting has nearly vanished, and fake news fills the void.
- Hillary Rodham Clinton asked, "How do we rebuild democracy?" Her answer: "Call out fake news. Subscribe to newspapers."

*Becky Shankland*

## ***May Lunch with a Leader: Library Manager Eileen Sullivan***

Eileen Sullivan, the Los Alamos County Library Manager, arrived in the county last July from Silver City, where she had served as the library director for seven years. Describing some of her work there, Sullivan explained that Silver City was very isolated. Economic and workforce development opportunities were limited. The solution was to develop information-based businesses and to provide training for residents to work at those businesses. Courses were offered by the university, but some found the campus intimidating, whereas they were comfortable in the library. So, the library collaborated with the small business bureau, adult education services, and literacy programs to set up a computer training lab.

Before Sullivan's arrival here, the Los Alamos County Library had engaged in some strategic planning and had defined their mission as: opportunities to gather, grow, learn, and know by providing open and equal access to a variety of spaces, ideas, and information through evolving services and technology.

Sullivan assured the group that libraries are not going out of style. In fact, the check-out rate in Los Alamos County was up 4% over the previous year. However, libraries are adapting to the changes in our society. They are diversifying to satisfy the needs of their patrons. Libraries have always offered a welcoming space, but some are now providing health care programs and classes for workforce development as well. In addition, she said, the Pew Research Center reports that a growing number of people believe libraries can help them locate information they can trust.

Sullivan listed new initiatives underway at Los Alamos County Library:

- 1,000 books: a program to develop early literacy by inspiring children to read 1,000 books before they enter kindergarten; more than 200 kids have signed up;

- Cover to Cover: collaboration with the schools to run book clubs for grades 3-6;
- Hoopla: electronic digital services offering streaming video, music, and audio;
- Make It at the Library: hands-on creative activities for ages 8-108; and
- 100 Days: a Community Services Department collaborative program including teen outreach, evenings of arts and culture.

The library must decide how much of the budget to allocate for technology and how much for traditional reading materials. Fortunately, they have other sources of income in addition to that received from the county. There is a grant from the NM State Library and revenue from a general obligations bond initiative. The Friends of the Library funds programs, collections, and technology as well.

Finally, Sullivan alerted the group that Mesa Library would be closed from August 20 to the end of November while the cooling and heating systems are updated. Limited services will be available; there will be additional capacity at the White Rock Library during those months.

*Barbara Calef*

## **Observer Corps Reports**

### **County Council**

At the County Council meeting on May 22, Council approved the budget for the HVAC and lighting improvements to Mesa Public Library. The library will be closed from August 20 until November 30 for this work. The southeast section will be available for borrowing and return of materials, although the materials will likely not be available until the following day.

At the same meeting Beverly Simpson, the Emergency Services Commander for the Los Alamos Police Department, presented the Emergency Evacuation Plans for the county. The plans include an Emergency Alert and Notification System that involves calling all county phone landlines in an emergency. If you would also like notification by text, email and/or cell phone,



*Photo of Library Manager Eileen Sullivan courtesy of Los Alamos Daily Post.*

be sure to sign up for Code Red at this address: <https://public.coderedweb.com/CNE/es/BFB7CC4C6C0A>.

Note that our Forest Service, LANL, and the county have announced Stage 2 fire restrictions, and many of these forests are expected to close in June.

*Lynn Jones*

## **Board of Public Utilities**

The Board of Public Utilities met on Wednesday, May 16, 2018, for its monthly meeting. Two public hearings to establish a method of determining customers' credit ratings and an increase in deposit fees were tabled. The BPU voted for the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) to notify the other owners of the San Juan Generation Plant (a coal-fired plant in the Farmington area) of the county's intent to exit the facility in 2022 when its contract expires. The County Council confirmed this decision at the May 22, 2018, Council meeting. Lastly, the BPU approved DPU refinancing the remaining debt on the Los Alamos wastewater treatment plant and taking out a new 30-year low-interest loan to build a new wastewater treatment facility in White Rock.

*Julie Williams-Hill*

## ***Minutes of the LWVLA Annual Meeting on Tuesday, April 17, 2018 at Mesa Public Library, Los Alamos, NM***

The meeting was called to order by co-president Barbara Calef at 1:15 p.m. Introduction of attendees followed with recognition of board members and identification of their jobs.

There were no additions or corrections to the minutes for the last Annual Meeting and they were accepted as printed in the June Update.

Kyle Wheeler and Lynn Jones were appointed as readers of the minutes of the Annual Meeting for 2017-2018.

## **Co-President's Report**

President's report for 2017-2018 was given by Barbara Calef. Some of the achievements highlighted were:

- Nine issues of the Update were published.
- Last spring we held a forum about the recreation bond.
- The League delivered a letter to the County Council urging them to take action to re-open the Public Health Office.
- Barbara Calef is leading a state League study of the transfer of federal public lands.
- Kathy Taylor is participating in a state study of nuclear waste storage. She conducted a forum on the subject that was videotaped and posted on YouTube.
- A Social Evening was held to encourage and invite new members. More than 40 people attended. Tarin Nix gave information about how best to be in contact with elected state representatives. Rick Reiss gave an update about the County Council's lobbying efforts.
- A second Social Evening was held to explain, train, and encourage people to attend League Day at the Legislature.
- The League sent a letter to the Public Education Department objecting to the changes they proposed to make to the Next Generation Science Standards and encouraged our members to do the same.
- A legislative preview meeting was held in January with State Senators Carlos Cisneros and Richard Martinez and State Representative Stephanie Garcia Richard participating. Artie Pepin, Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), spoke in support of the constitutional amendment that would give courts 3% of the budget instead of allowing the legislature or the governor to decide on their budget.
- A voter registration drive was held during the student walk-out to protest gun violence. There were 17 new registrations.
- Karyl Ann Armbruster organized eleven excellent Lunch with a Leader programs. They were always well attended.

## Membership Report

Becky Shankland reported that our membership stands at 76 members. It includes:

- 1 life member,
- 3 national members,
- 34 regular members,
- 8 sustaining members (including the life member),
- 13 household members, and
- 18 sustaining household members.

Gale Zander Barlow and Mary Van Eeckhout have moved and will be missed. Both were active members.

## Treasurer's Report

Julie Williams-Hill reported for Kathy Taylor that there are currently \$5,684.54 in the general account and \$2,147.14 in the savings account at Los Alamos National Bank and \$19,372.75 in the Education Fund in Washington DC.

The fund drive was held in March, and people donated \$425 to support the League. Those contributors do not necessarily want to be members.

Julie also reported that Kathy Taylor had applied for a 501(c)(3) designation last July and finally received approval the first week of March. This new status will allow members to deduct all dues and contributions to the LWV Los Alamos. It will no longer be necessary to write donation checks to the LWV Education Fund in order to get this tax deduction.

This status also has benefits for the Treasurer, who will no longer have to send donation checks to the national LWV Education Fund in Washington DC. The Treasurer will no longer need to apply for reimbursement for eligible expenses, such as forum advertising and room rental. We will also be able to hold these funds in our own account and receive interest.

## Adoption of Local Programs

Barbara Calef reported that there are no proposals for new studies. As stated in the Co-President's Report, local League members are pursuing state studies on the transfer of federal public lands and nuclear waste storage. In addition, Akkana Peck is working on an update of the state position on health care.

Instead of a new study, the League will follow up on several existing positions:

- Transportation: Encourage weekend service for Atomic City Transit.
- Sustainability: Seek improvements in education about recycling; make the White Rock disposal site friendlier. Ask if the League can be a sounding board for recycling literature to make sure it is effective.

The Development Code needs to be updated.

We need to find out who is in charge of the County water and conservation plans.

Also, we plan to hold a forum on early childhood education in New Mexico.

Sandra West agreed to help on sustainability issues.

Kyle Wheeler moved that the local program be adopted as presented. Amy Birnbaum seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

## Adoption of the 2018-2020 Budget

After a presentation of the proposed budget by Julie Williams-Hill and some explanation of why some items have changed, Amy Birnbaum made the motion that the budget be accepted as proposed. Kyle Wheeler seconded the motion. After a short discussion the question was called and passed.

## Election of Officers and Directors for 2018-2019

Becky Shankland presented the following slate for the board of 2018-2019:

Officers:

- Co-Presidents: Barbara Calef and Rebecca Shankland
- 1st Vice President: *unfilled*
- 2nd Vice President: Leslie Wallstrom
- Treasurer: Kathleen Taylor
- Secretary: Rosmarie Frederickson

(See the next page for the list of Directors.)

Directors:

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

Barbara announced the two candidate forums scheduled for May 3 and May 9 as well as the May 19 LWVNM Council Meeting.

**The meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.**

*Rosmarie Frederickson*

Off Board Directors:

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

Barbara asked for nominations from the floor. There were none.

Kyle Wheeler made the motion to accept nominations and elect the nominees. Karyl Ann Armbruster seconded the motion. The motion passed.



*The delegates to the Council meeting of the League of Women Voters of New Mexico held May 19 in Albuquerque. Barbara Calef is 4th from the right in the back row; Becky Shankland is 2nd from the right in the middle row; Akkana Peck and Sandra West are 3rd and 4th from the right in the front row. Photo by Brenda McKenna.*



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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