



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

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Calendar

August 15	Lunch with a Leader, Douglas Carver, NM Ethics Watch, 11:40 a.m.
August 31	Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, noon
September 7	Social Gathering, 1372 47 th St., Los Alamos, 6-7:30 p.m.
September 19	Lunch with a Leader, U.S. Forest Service Rangers Lynn Bjorklund and Jennifer Sublett, Mesa Public Library, 11:40 a.m.

Lunch with a Leader: Douglas Carver, NM Ethics Watch

Our next Lunch with a Leader will be at 11:40 a.m. on August 15 at Mesa Public Library. Douglas H.M. Carver is the executive director of New Mexico Ethics Watch, a nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to promoting more ethical governance in New Mexico. For five years he was a staff attorney for the Legislative Council Service, in which capacity he served on the Interim Legislative Ethics Committee and as lead staff for the Courts, Corrections and Justice Committee. As you may be aware, on the ballot for the 2018 General Election there will be a question calling for a constitutional amendment to create an Ethics Commission. Carver will discuss the ethics commission amendment in the context of New Mexico's ethics environment.

In September Jennifer Sublett and Lynn Bjorklund will be sharing information from their positions at the Forest Service.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

Social Gathering for Members and Friends, September 7

Long-time League members, recent new members, and inquiring non-members are invited to a Social Gathering on Thursday, September 7, 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the home of Rosmarie Frederickson (1372 47th St., off Sandia in the Western Area.)

Suzie Havemann, our Fund Drive chair, suggested to the board that we would all enjoy an opportunity to get to know our fellow League members, or, for those who have not joined yet, to find out what the League is all about. Members are encouraged to bring a friend! There will be wine, beer, juice, and water as well as hearty hors d'oeuvres.

One of the League's missions is to educate ourselves and others about our government. Political strategist Tarin Nix will speak briefly about how citizens can interact with the NM Legislature and Councilor Rick Reiss will talk about the state government from the County's perspective. After their short presentations, they will answer your questions about NM politics.

Besides refreshments and socializing, we'll also answer questions about the League—what we don't do (endorse candidates or parties) and what we do (study and lobby on issues). Everyone is welcome to attend.

LWVLA Board

Co-President's Message: Money in Politics, N M Style

If, like me, you are outraged at the way big money dominates our elections (do you remember the definition of "plutocracy" that you learned in high school?), know that New Mexico is trying to clean up campaign financing. The effort is right in line with national League positions.

The LWVUS has been studying and lobbying on Money in Politics for many years. Here is the relevant portion of the national position, which of course has had to take into account the Supreme Court's decision in the Citizens United vs. FEC case that money is speech, and speech can't be limited:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the methods of financing political campaigns should:

- Protect representative democracy from being distorted by big spending in election campaigns;
- Ensure transparency and the public's right to know who is using money to influence elections....

In 2017 the NM legislature passed a law governing campaign financing and addressing the concerns of Citizens United, but it was vetoed by the governor. As a result, Secretary of State Maggie Toulouse Oliver has recently proposed similar rules to cover Campaign Finance that can be read at: http://www.sos.state.nm.us/Elections_Data/notice-of-proposed-rulemaking.aspx.

Our NM League has given testimony in support of these rules. They are designed to make large donations more transparent and to regulate reporting of so-called “coordinated” expenditures where supposedly independent PACs support specific candidates.

LWVNM President Judith Williams’s letter of support closes: “The League of Women Voters believes that an open, transparent government including the running and financing of political campaigns is key to a healthy democracy. The Secretary has done a good job of interpreting existing laws to arrive at a clear and sensible set of disclosure rules.”

Now it’s our turn. Individuals, whether League members or not, are encouraged to give written comments to the Secretary of State by August 29 at 5 p.m. at sos.rules@state.nm.us. Do your part to make New Mexico great again—well, at least to limit the influence of big money in our elections.

Becky Shankland

Welcome, New Members!

Introducing New Member Leslie Wallstrom: Leslie Wallstrom moved to Los Alamos 25 years ago, right after her marriage to a LANL physicist. She joined the LWV in the 1990s, and was active on the Healthcare Committee. Then she had three children and got swept up in their care and activities. She has been very involved with the Los Alamos Public Schools and with her church community, but her daughters are grown (almost), and she decided to rejoin the LWV, and work to strengthen democratic institutions. Leslie has a Masters in Public Administration and a professional background in non-profits. She has worked with several non-profits here in town, doing marketing, writing grants, performing administrative tasks, etc. Currently, she is a guide at the Bradbury Science Museum and writes grants for the Family YMCA.

Welcome also to Dr. Robert Williams and Judith Buckingham. We hope that Bob will help with our new state League study of nuclear waste disposal.

Farewell to Joe Thompson

Joe and Lois Thompson have been League members for about 10 years. We were sad to learn of Joe’s death at age 85. He and Lois have lived in Los Alamos (White Rock) since 1981, where he was an enthusiastic outdoorsman: ski patroller, runner, hiker, biker, camper. We send our condolences to Lois and hope to see her at League events.

Becky Shankland, Membership Chair

Report of June Lunch with a Leader: Stephanie Garcia Richard's 2017 Legislative Wrap Up

Stephanie Garcia Richard's takeaway for the Legislative session was, "...we cut, we cut and cut and cut." In a 60-day session any bill can be introduced. Most of the bills stalled (in committee, in the House or Senate), or were stopped by a veto by Gov. Susana Martinez. Elected District 43 State Representative in 2012, Richard has learned that almost all bills, even good ones, take more than one session to pass into law.

Several of the bills Richard introduced focused on education, including

- creating a strategic planning task force;
- developing a 20-year education plan from early childhood through college;
- limiting the use of attendance in teacher evaluations;
- limiting statewide school testing days.

Other of her more high-profile bills were "Unaffiliated Voters In Primary Elections," "Pregnant Worker Accommodation Act," "The Bear Bill," (a constituent-introduced bill calling for an evaluation of whether a bear attack was defensive or predatory before killing the bear), and "Background Checks On Gun Transfers" (that bill was the most controversial issue discussed at the LWV's Legislative Preview). None of these bills succeeded in passing both Houses and gaining the Governor's approval this year.

Some of the other bills that failed during the regular session, but that will come back are the minimum wage bill, campaign finance, and payday lending (the current session passed legislation to cap interest rates at 250%).

In the May Special Session the tax overhaul failed to clear committee, but several bills passed at least either the House or Senate to

- borrow severance tax money (that would normally go to infrastructure projects);
- balance the budget;
- increase both the gas and vehicle excise tax;
- restore money vetoed by the Governor to fund higher education and the courts;
- increase funding for cancer research.

Richard admits that service as a legislator requires long hours of hard, frustrating work. The work does not end with the session. She also serves as the House Education Committee Chair and as a member of the Labor and Economic Development Committee between sessions; she must spend time studying the many crucial issues and responding to people opposed to her bills. But she appreciates the opportunity to work with other New Mexicans to determine the future of the state; to meet hundreds of New Mexicans from all political and cultural affiliations; and to work not only with her own party, but across the aisle on some bills to push the state into the 21st century.

Richard noted that her own Girl Scout Troop shadowed her for one day of "training the next generation of women in government." More girls who grow into women participating in politics can redirect the course of our state's government. Richard hopes to help encourage them.

Jody Benson

Observer Corps Reports

County Council

Between the County Council meetings on June 6 and July 11, the County Council agreed upon the sale of two adjoining parcels of land in White Rock, encompassing about 60 acres, for mainly residential use. About 1.5 acres of the tracts are expected to be commercial. The two parcels are within the A-19-A tract and lie immediately to the east of Pajarito Road and north of NM 4. Hopefully within a year or two RayLee Homes will start to build on this land.

At the June 27 meeting, County Manager Harry Burgess reported that the turnaround time on all permits from the county is now averaging 1.57 days. That is a major improvement over past performance.

Burgess also reported that the Police Department purchased body-mounted cameras for their officers. The officers have been trained and are now using these cameras. According to Burgess, insurance reimbursed the county for the \$49,000 purchase money for the cameras.

As of July 3, our new Library Manager is Eileen Sullivan. She spent seven years as Library Director in Silver City. Interestingly, she originally graduated from the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music and later earned her Library of Science degree from U. of Texas at Austin. We wish her well as she and her husband join our community.

The County Council met on July 26th to debate a resolution submitted by Councilor Pete Sheehey enumerating the duties of the sheriff's office. Complicating this effort was a threatened lawsuit from Sheriff Lucero's lawyer that would be submitted to the courts if the proposed resolution was not passed. This lawsuit was distributed to Council just prior to the meeting. After much discussion, several council votes, and public comment, the resolution, which had been amended to remove the last paragraph, was tabled. A suggestion by Councilor Chrobocinski that a Charter Committee be established to clarify the Charter language regarding duties of the police and sheriff in Los Alamos County will be discussed at a later date.

Lynn Jones

Board of Public Utilities

On June 21st the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) approved proposed ordinances to increase the water and sewage rates by 8%. The ordinances will make their way to the County Council to be considered for adoption on August 8th. Additionally, the BPU heard a presentation from a consultant, Pace Global, on the findings for an Integrated Resource Plan (IRP). Assessing risk, cost and other factors, Pace Global looked at future power generation options for the county that would help meet the county's load and goals. A meeting for the public on the IRP findings was held in White Rock on July 12th, and a presentation to the council was made on July 18th.

At the July 19th BPU meeting a public hearing to raise the non-potable water rates (water that is used primarily for irrigation) was tabled until August 16th. The primary customer for non-potable water is Los Alamos County Parks and Recreation.

Julie Williams-Hill

Needed: Volunteer for Arrangements

For the past few years Mary Van Eeckhout has been the Director of Arrangements for our League. She has stored the equipment for the refreshments and, with assistance from Carol Smith, has set up the refreshments and beverages at the venue for our forums. They have done a great job! But Mary is moving to Minnesota, so we need a volunteer to take over.

In the last year, an election year, we held five forums, with the food supplied by League members (and the AAUW) and beverages paid for out of our treasury. This year we'll have fewer events. If you are interested in helping the League in this important task, or joining with a friend to share it, please contact Becky Shankland at 672-9106 or [rebecca.shankland\(AT\)gmail\(DOT\)com](mailto:rebecca.shankland(AT)gmail(DOT)com). Thanks!

Becky Shankland

Renew or Join the League for 2017-18!

If you haven't yet joined or rejoined the League (our fiscal year is May 1 through April 30), please check the next-to-last page of this newsletter, fill it out, and mail it with a check with the appropriate amount to League of Women Voters of Los Alamos, P. O. Box 158, Los Alamos, NM 87544. Be sure to put a check mark by your interests. Thanks!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2017-18

Officers

Co-Presidents: Barbara Calef and Becky Shankland

1st VP: *not filled*

2nd VP: *not filled*

Treasurer: Kathy Taylor

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Lunch with a Leader: Karyl Ann Armbruster

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Board of Public Utilities Observer: Julie Williams-Hill

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Arrangements: *not filled*

Fundraising: Suzie Havemann

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Observer Corps: Lynn Jones

Newsletter Editor: Waive Archer

Nominating Committee: Carroll Thomas, Tarin Nix



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LOS ALAMOS
MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

Name: _____

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- Check here if you prefer to receive this Update electronically, saving us postage.
Check here if you prefer the newsletter mailed in hard copy.
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 Education 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
Budget, Finances
Elections
Water Issues
Land Use, Public Lands
Local Government
Health Care
Money in Politics
Website, social media
Other (please suggest)
Education
Living Wage
Voting Rights/Voter Services
Sustainability
Public Transportation
Public Relations
Newsletter
Membership
Not sure (I just support LWV)

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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