



# 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)**

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## **Calendar**

- December 9 LWVNM Advocacy Workshop, Santa Fe, 10 a.m.
- December 12 Lunch with a Leader, Voices of Los Alamos, Mesa Public Library, 11:40 a.m.
- January 10 Legislative Preview, Fuller Lodge, 7 p.m. (6:30 for refreshments)
- January 18 Pre-League Day Social Gathering, 520 Navajo Rd., Barranca Mesa, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- January 25 Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, noon
- January 31 LWVNM Legislative Reception, Garrett's Desert Inn, 311 Old Santa Fe Trail, 5:30 p.m.
- February 1 LWVNM League Day at the Legislature, State Land Office, 310 Old Santa Fe Trail, 10:15 a.m. and Roundhouse

## **Lunch with a Leader: Voices of Los Alamos; Denise Fort**

On December 12 (yes, this is the second Tuesday in December) our speakers will be Voices of Los Alamos founders and supporters. Cristina Olds, Becky Oertel, and Anagha Dandekar will share why this group arose after the last election, what they have accomplished, and what they plan to do in the future. Voices of Los Alamos meets the last Monday of each month at the Unitarian Church meeting room at 6:30 if you want to put that on your calendar.

January 16 (back to the third Tuesday of the month), Denise Fort, Emerita Professor of Law at UNM and adviser to the Wallace Genetic Foundation, will speak. Fort resigned her position as a Professor of Law and Director of the School's Utton Center to focus on climate change and environmental advocacy. She will talk with us about the environment in NM and what threats New Mexico may face.

Both of these speakers are terrific and you will not want to miss hearing them. We will be back to the third Tuesday with Denise's presentation. Sorry for the change; the holidays just came too close for LWV!

*Karyl Ann Armbruster*

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2017-18**

### **Officers**

Co-Presidents: Barbara Calef and Rebecca Shankland

1<sup>st</sup> VP: *not filled*

2<sup>nd</sup> VP: *not filled*

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Secretary: Rosmarie Fredrickson

### **Directors**

Reservations: Amy Birnbaum

Lunch with a Leader: Karyl Ann Armbruster

Membership: Rebecca Shankland

Voter Services: Lynn Jones

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Publicity: Jody Benson

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### **Off-Board Directors**

Arrangements: *not filled*

Fundraising: Suzie Havemann

Webmaster: Julie Williams-Hill

Assistant Webmaster: Barbara Lemmick

Observer Corps: Lynn Jones

Newsletter Editor: Wayne Archer

Nominating Committee: Tarin Nix

## **LWVNM Advocacy Workshop in Santa Fe December 9**

### **Effective Citizen Advocacy at the Legislature**

**Saturday, December 9, 2017, 10 a.m. to Noon**

**New Mexico State Capitol, Room 322 (enter on the East side only)**

The public is invited. Learn tips from legislators and a professional lobbyist about how to interact with legislators, speak at hearings, and advocate for your cause.

#### **Speakers:**

Senator Peter Wirth, D-Santa Fe, District 25

Senator Sander Rue, R-Albuquerque, District 23

Jim Jackson, Chief Executive Officer of Disability Rights New Mexico, an independent private non-profit organization authorized through federal law to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

*If you would like to carpool to this event, please email [bfcalef\(AT\)gmail\(DOT\)com](mailto:bfcalef(AT)gmail(DOT)com)*

## **Chromium Plume Presentation at Voices of Los Alamos**

Danny Katzman is the Technical Program Director for LANL's chromium project and a hydrogeologist. Katzman began his presentation to Voices of Los Alamos on November 27 with a statement that he was working on a way to explain the complicated technical project, putting together FAQs (frequently asked questions) for the DOE website. His talk was based on those questions. He said they will be posted in a week.

Chromium occurs in two forms: chromium-3 or trivalent, which is harmless, and chromium-6 or hexavalent, which is toxic to humans. The hexavalent form, which dissolves in water, is used for chrome plating. At the Lab it was used to prevent corrosion in the power plant cooling towers from 1956 to 1972. During that time about 160,000 pounds of excessive concentrations was released into Sandia Canyon.

In 1972 the plant operators switched to a different corrosion inhibitor after chromium showed up in surface water below the area where chromium was being released. The chromium plume was discovered in 2005; it is approximately one mile by one-half mile in size, approximately 1,000 feet below ground level, and 50-60 feet thick. It floats near the top of our aquifer below laboratory property, south of East Jemez Road and extending to the Laboratory's border with San Ildefonso. It is migrating in an easterly direction. Since the county's drinking water wells draw from almost a thousand feet deeper in the aquifer, they are safe from contamination at present.

Currently DOE and the Laboratory are working to prevent migration and reduce the size of the plume through a process of extracting, treating, and reinjecting. Through a series of extraction wells, the contaminated groundwater is pumped above ground and treated using a method called ion exchange. The clean water is then transported through a series of buried pipes to injection wells. These wells were installed at the eastern edge of the plume so that when the clean water is reinjected into the aquifer it results in a mounding of the water table (a speed bump). This mound pushes the contaminated water back toward the center of the plume. Also, any contaminated water that may manage to pass through the mound is greatly diluted. Katzman mentioned that the DOE has spent 50 million dollars installing this infrastructure and was sensitive to cultural sites and environmental issues. He indicated that the infrastructure is barely visible.

Studies are underway to evaluate a permanent remedy to clean the concentrated plume. DOE and LANL have looked at pump-and-treat remediation; however, they believe a more promising solution is to convert the hexavalent chromium to trivalent by injecting the plume with either molasses or sodium dithionite.

James Alarid, Department of Public Utilities (DPU) Deputy Utility Manager, explained that no drinking water wells have been contaminated by the chromium plume. DOE has drilled two sentinel wells between the chromium plume and PM3 well, the closest drinking water well, which is a ¼ mile away from plume. The sentry wells measure the water at the level of the water table and at the level of withdrawal and will provide an early warning of a contamination risk for drinking water. Should one of the sentinel wells indicate contamination from the chromium plume, the County would have plenty of time to react before it reaches drinking water well PM3.

Extensive testing is conducted on all of the county's drinking water wells for total chromium. NMED conducts tests every three years. LANL and DPU test yearly. In addition, LANL and DPU test the four drinking wells closest to the plume quarterly for total chromium. Alarid noted that some chromium occurs naturally in our drinking water, and has ranged over the years from non-detectable to 13 parts per billion. The state maximum for drinking water is 50 parts per billion.

Should a well become contaminated, DPU can take the well off-line. Alarid confirmed that the county also has an insurance policy that will pay to either replace a well or treat the drinking water to safe standards. DPU will not provide water to its customers that doesn't meet safe federal and state drinking water standards.

Lastly, Alarid pointed out that not only is Los Alamos drinking water safe, but it is excellent quality water. The DPU held an informal blind taste test at an Earth Day event in 2005. Various Los Alamos residents were asked to identify the tap water among various bottled waters. The majority identified the Fiji bottled water as Los Alamos County's tap water! A comparison of our tap water with the Fiji brand water revealed that the mineral constituents were very similar, including the high levels of silica. DPU

Manager Tim Glasco pointed out that Fiji water, packed in plastic bottles and shipped from the antipodes, has 250,000 times the carbon footprint.

*Barbara Calef and Julie Williams-Hill*

## **Co-President's Message: Should Rosa Parks and the Atomic Bomb Be Part of New Mexico Students' Knowledge?**

In yet another secretive twist in the work of the NM PED (Public Education Department), the social studies “End of Course” assessments were modified by means that have not been fully explained. But when the alarming changes were discovered, concerned (even outraged) citizens rallied to protest.

The venue for the protest was the LESC (Legislative Education Study Committee) meeting on November 16, at which Barbara Calef, Peter and Janie O'Rourke, and I joined Meredith Machen, LWVNM Education Chair. Only one public comment was on the agenda, that of Dr. Lois Rudnick, who stunned the audience with a brilliant speech during which she listed the appalling deletions. After she spoke, Senator Mimi Stewart, chair of the LESC, asked for committee members to comment—and a huge outpouring of criticism came from representatives like Bill McCamley, Andrés Romero (an Albuquerque history teacher) and Sheryl Williams Stapleton. Then Stewart asked for public comment: Meredith Machen spoke, as did Los Alamos School Board member Ellen Ben-Naim and many others representing teachers, unions, and civic groups.

For social studies the PED has cherry-picked the subjects that will be tested--remember that both teachers and schools are graded heavily on testing results. As several speakers reminded us: What gets tested, gets taught.

A few of the most egregious deletions were the League of Nations, trust-busting, Williams Jennings Bryan, dropping atomic bombs on Japan, House Un-American Activities Committee, arms race, *Roe v. Wade*, the impeachment process, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, and how a bill becomes a law. **Ask yourself: are these topics relevant today?**

Are these inconvenient truths? Since no one is has been able to get the PED to explain the process for eliminating these topics, one can only notice that there is a pattern of ignoring failures of US democracy or strategies for addressing problems. So, we're left speculating “Who would do this, and why?” Is it political? Probably.

What next? The PED spokesman, Matt Montaña, answered a question by saying that these deletions could be changed. But so far there has been no word that it has happened. Those at the hearing, legislators and citizens, are convinced that the PED needs a hefty dose of transparency medicine.

*Becky Shankland*

For those wishing to read further and take action on this crucial issue, here are some links:

- Twenty minutes of the LESC meeting: <http://ksfr.org/post/legislators-scrutinize-proposed-public-education-department-history-and-social-studies-changes>

- Rabbi Neil Amswych's letter to the *Santa Fe New Mexican*:  
[http://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/my\\_view/when-rosa-parks-was-asked-to-sit-at-the-back/article\\_223a32a9-bfe1-5b10-b22b-ff781c3fda31.ht](http://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/my_view/when-rosa-parks-was-asked-to-sit-at-the-back/article_223a32a9-bfe1-5b10-b22b-ff781c3fda31.ht)

*Letter from LWVNM to LESC Chair, Senator Mimi Stewart*

We want to thank you for the organizing the LESC hearing on the Social Studies EoC [end of course] assessments. As former teachers and retired educators who are deeply involved in public education issues, we were tremendously impressed with the fairness of the hearing and the time allotted, not just for the two invited speakers but also for members of the community who wished to speak. We found the questioning by the legislators thorough and thoughtful.

While we realize that we cannot take on every issue of concern around standards and blueprints, we hope that what was said and heard will lead the PED to reconsider its blackouts in the 2017-18 EoCs for Social Studies and Health. Of course, in the longer term, the PED must reconsider its processes. Concerned citizens want broader participation in decision-making from teachers around the state and from subject matter experts, before they propose deletions and changes.

Systemic changes will have to happen in the future under a new administration. Thank you for trying to make PED more accountable, for your very capable leadership of the LESC, for your expertise, and your dedication to providing quality education in New Mexico.

Sincerely,

*Dr. Lois Rudnick, Professor Emerita of American Studies, University of Massachusetts Boston, Interfaith Coalition for the Public Schools*

*Dr. Meredith Machen, Vice President for Educational Leadership (ret.), Santa Fe Community College, LWVNM Education Chair*

***\*\*If you too would like to write to express your concern about these deletions from the end-of-course assessments, these are the people to write:***

Chris Ruskowski, Secretary-Designate of the PED [c.ruskowski@state.nm.us](mailto:c.ruskowski@state.nm.us)

Governor Susana Martinez [Susana.martinez2@state.nm.us](mailto:Susana.martinez2@state.nm.us)

Senator Mimi Stewart [mimi.stewart@nmlegis.gov](mailto:mimi.stewart@nmlegis.gov)

Rep. Stephanie Garcia Richard [Stephanie.garciarichard@nmlegis.gov](mailto:Stephanie.garciarichard@nmlegis.gov)

Rep. Andres Romero [andres.romero@nmlegis.gov](mailto:andres.romero@nmlegis.gov)

In addition, League members are invited to participate in teleconferences.

- To join, send a message to [lwvnmaction-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:lwvnmaction-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

You will receive an email from the group, asking you to confirm your request to join the list--reply to it immediately, and you will be on the mailing list.

The Action Committee meets by phone weekly during the legislative session, and monthly throughout the year. Meeting times and agendas, as well as more extensive discussions of proposed legislation, are sent to the LWVNM Action mailing list.

## ***Legislative Preview January 10***

The 2018 session of the legislature begins on January 16 and will last 30 days. Once again, the AAUW is co-sponsoring our annual legislative preview. It will be held in Fuller Lodge on Wednesday, January 10, from 7 to 9 p.m. with refreshments at 6:30 p.m. Everyone is invited.

Our legislators, Representative Stephanie Garcia Richard and Senators Carlos Cisneros and Richard Martinez, will participate. We have also invited Chief Justice Judith Nakamura (or a substitute) to discuss the pretrial release and detention rules issued by the New Mexico Supreme Court this year as well as the need for increased funding for the judiciary.

*Barbara Calef*

## **Observer Corps Reports**

### **Board of Public Utilities**

The Board of Public Utilities meeting was held on November 15th. Board members discussed how to proceed with the annual self-evaluation, which is required by the board policies and procedures manual. Utilities Manager Tim Glasco reviewed the recently issued quarterly performance report and presented an action plan to improve the Department of Public Utilities customer satisfaction and engagement scores.

Due to scheduling conflicts in December, the next BPU meeting will be held on December 11th. On the agenda is a review and possible approval of the revised Long-range Water Supply Plan. DPU held a public meeting on the plan on November 13th. A video of the meeting is available on the DPU website at [https://losalamosnm.us/government/departments/utilities/water\\_supply/](https://losalamosnm.us/government/departments/utilities/water_supply/).

*Julie Williams-Hill*

### **County Council**

At the November 14<sup>th</sup> County Council meeting, the Council passed an ordinance allowing the transfer of funds from one utility to another with the approval of both the County Council and the Board of Public Utilities.

The Council also approved the purchase, sale, and development agreement for the property just east of the Los Alamos Medical Center (tracts A-12 and A-13-2). This is the site of the old, and now demolished, DOE Site Office building. The buyer is LAH Investors, LLC, which is managed by Santa Fe Properties Real Estate Company of which Gerald Peters is president. The buyer plans to build 150 high-end apartments geared toward the LANL workforce, hopefully to be available in late 2020.

*Lynn Jones*

## ***Pre-League Day Social Gathering January 22***

At 6:30 p.m. on Monday, January 22, we will hold our first ever pre-League Day gathering at the home of Lynn Jones, 520 Navajo Rd. on Barranca Mesa. The purpose is two-fold. We have heard that some League members do not participate in League Day because they do not know what to expect at the Roundhouse. League leaders will explain the activities during the legislative session and how to be involved. Also, this will be a social occasion with plenty of time for informal conversation and to enjoy the goodies supplied by board members.

## ***League Days at the Legislature, January 31-February 1***

**All League members are cordially invited to two events: the Legislative Reception the evening of Wednesday, January 31 and League Day at the Legislature on Thursday, February 1, with the chance to stay overnight in Santa Fe. There will also be an optional guided visit to the Roundhouse and your own legislators.**

The 2018 Legislative Session is limited to budget items, vetoed legislation from 2017, and legislation that the Governor puts on her call. Key to this session will be opposing some of the regressive policies and tax loopholes from recent years that have reduced the availability of funds for essential programs. The League will be supporting a number of tax proposals aimed at making New Mexico's tax structure more progressive and generating revenue for essential services.

Packets of informational materials will be available at the reception Wednesday evening and at the League table in the East Hall of the Roundhouse on Thursday.

### **Legislative Reception, January 31, 5:30-7:30 p.m.**

LWVNM is again organizing a legislative reception during the session. All New Mexico state legislators and all League members are invited to attend the event, which will be held in Santa Fe at Garrett's Desert Inn (311 Old Santa Fe Trail) on Wednesday, January 31 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. In the 2017 Special Session the Legislature appropriated \$400,000 to hire a firm to conduct a study of the New Mexico tax structure. Richard Anklam--President and Executive Director of the New Mexico Tax Research Institute--will address the study and the proposed tax reform legislation. This is also a chance to chat with legislators and League members from around the state.

### **League Day at the Legislature, February 1**

League Day is an opportunity for League members to familiarize themselves with our state government, attend committee meetings, and speak with our legislators. From 10:15 to noon we will assemble at the State Land Office, Morgan Hall, 310 Old Santa Fe Trail, to hear Viki Harrison, Executive Director of Common Cause New Mexico, speak about the 2018 Ethics Commission constitutional amendment and what the League and other groups want in the enabling legislation. Also, Bill Jordan, Policy Director, New Mexico Voices for Children and Convenor of the N.M. Fairness Project, will propose revenue generators that can address the fairness and sufficiency of our tax system.

After lunch on your own, we will organize for the Roundhouse, visiting and lobbying our own legislators, and sitting in on House and Senate sessions and/or legislative hearings.

If you would like to stay in Santa Fe, Garrett's Desert Inn is offering us a special group rate of \$60 single plus \$10 for each additional person (plus tax) for double queen, king, or single based on availability. Call [505-982-1851](tel:505-982-1851) to reserve a room. You must reserve your room by January 18 with the code "Swing Vote" to get this discounted rate. The group rate is not available online.

*Barbara Calef*

## ***Welcome, New Members!***

**Caroline (Cas) Mason** came to Los Alamos in 1972 and ended up working at LANL for 30 years in chemical-related subjects as she has a Ph.D. in Chemistry from the University of London. She has given talks to the League about her work for the IAEA in Vienna and also about her work for the CAB (Citizen's Advisory Board) for LANL on environmental matters. She volunteers with the Oppenheimer Memorial Committee (a past chair), the Santa Fe Alliance for Science, the Master Gardeners, and the Santa Fe Opera gardens; and she has worked for the state and local AAUW organizations.

**Sandra West**, a native New Mexican, came here from Albuquerque in 2009, after completing her MA in Biology. She also holds a BA in Environmental Engineering. In Los Alamos, she has worked at a number of community-oriented organizations including the Family YMCA and the Los Alamos Coop Market. She currently works as Marketing Manager for PEEC and teaches posture exercise classes. She served on the Environmental Sustainability Board (ESB) and is currently on a subcommittee for ESB. Sandra strives to help us live better in the world and is eager to help with a variety of efforts that align with this goal.

## ***October Lunch with a Leader: Julianna Koob and Janet Gotkin***

Julianna Koob from Planned Parenthood and Janet Gotkin from the National Organization for Women in Santa Fe conducted a consciousness-raising workshop during Lunch with a Leader in November. Koob explained that she got involved in reproductive services after working at a shelter for victims of domestic violence as a college student. Gotkin became a spokesperson for abortion rights after assisting a teenager overcome administrative hurdles to achieve a legal abortion.

In 2014 both women were involved in Respect Albuquerque Women, an initiative leading to the defeat of an ordinance that would have banned abortions after the 20<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy. In the process, they developed an approach that enabled them to communicate with people who would have been turned off by the words "pro choice." Volunteers operated a weekly phone bank where they focused on listening to find common ground and shared values with the people they called.

Koob said that one in five women visit Planned Parenthood in their lifetime; one in three have an abortion; seven of ten people believe a woman should have the right to a safe, legal abortion. However, 27 states now restrict abortions. It is important to debunk the myth that abortion is a dangerous procedure and to encourage women to speak out about their experiences, to defeat the effort to shame them into silence.

*Barbara Calef*



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.
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
Local Government
Health Care
Money in Politics
Website, social media
Other (please suggest)
Education
Membership
Voting Rights/Voter Services
Sustainability
Public Transportation
Public Relations
Newsletter
Study of Transfer of Public Lands
Just support the League

*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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