



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

- November 14 LWVNM Board Meeting, Mesa Library, 11 a.m.
- November 17 Lunch with a Leader, Sen. Peter Wirth, Mesa Public Library, 11:45 a.m.
- December 3 Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, noon
- December 10 Money In Politics Consensus meeting, 926 Circle Dr., 7 p.m.
- December 15 Lunch with a Leader, Suki Halevi, Mesa Public Library, 11:45 a.m.

Lunch with a Leader: State Senator Peter Wirth

At our November 17 Lunch with a Leader, State Senator Peter Wirth will discuss how he believes First Amendment protections should apply to individuals and groups in the context of campaign finance and how to improve campaign finance regulation.

Senator Wirth was elected to the House of Representatives in 2004. Since 2008 he has served the State Senate representing Senate District 25. He is the Chair of the Senate Conservation Committee and serves on the Senate Judiciary Committee. During the interim he is Chair of the Water and Natural Resources Committee and is a member of the Tax Committee.

During his eleven years in the Legislature, fifty-one of the bills Senator Wirth sponsored are now law. In 2009 he worked with Senator Dede Feldman to pass campaign limits and passed a bill requiring campaign reports to be filed biannually. For the past three years he has carried a bill to require independent expenditure committees to disclose donors, the only action the US Supreme Court allowed in Citizens United.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

LWVLA Board 2015-2016

President, Barbara Calef
1st Vice President, Wendee Brunish
2nd Vice President, Rebecca Shankland
Secretary, Julie Williams-Hill
Treasurer, Rosmarie Frederickson, Kathleen Taylor
Directors:
Reservations, Amy Birnbaum
Lunch with a Leader, Karyl Ann Armbruster
Membership, Tarin Nix
Director-at-Large, Anne Nobile
Voter Services, Lynn Jones
Off-Board Directors:
Arrangements, Mary van Eeckhout
Budget, Kathleen Taylor
Newsletter, Kathleen Taylor
Nominations, Carroll Thomas, Michael McKay
Publicity, Jody Benson
Webmaster, Barbara Lemmick

President's Message

Following the October LWVLA Board meeting, I sent the following letter to the County Council:

The League of Women Voters believes that it is very important for residents to be able to follow their government in action even if they cannot be physically present. We are aware that no decisions are made at Council Work Sessions. Nevertheless, the public should be able to follow the discussions that occur at those meetings. Since detailed written minutes are no longer available, the problem is especially serious. We greatly appreciate the video streaming available in the new Municipal Building and have been waiting many months for the installation of cameras in the Firehouse in White Rock. The audio capability is not satisfactory: we cannot tell who is speaking and cannot quickly jump to a specific discussion. We therefore request that all Council meetings be held in the Municipal

Building until video capability is available at the Firehouse.

And received this reply from County Manager Harry Burgess:

Thanks for the input. I checked on our progress with respect to the White Rock camera installation and we just completed the necessary fiber connections this week. Our vendor for the installation is scheduled to begin Monday, as this work needed to follow the fiber. We do not have any work sessions scheduled for the months of November nor December, and I anticipate that we will be functional by our next scheduled meeting in January.

On the calendar you will see that the LWVNM Board will meet here in Los Alamos on Saturday, November 14. The meeting is open; visitors are welcome.

At the October LWVLA Board meeting it was decided to focus on money in politics during the November Lunch with a Leader program. Then on Thursday, December 10 at 7 p.m. League members will meet at the home of Amy and Ed Birnbaum (926 Circle Dr.) to discuss and respond to the money in politics consensus questions. Please read the article below for further details.

Barbara Calef

National Study of Money in Politics

The current LWVUS position on campaign finance was adopted in 1974 and amended in 1982. It says, "The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the methods of financing political campaigns should ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and allow maximum citizen participation in the political process."

In 2014 the delegates at the LWVUS Convention approved a study to update the position in view of the recent Supreme Court decisions that allow unlimited independent spending in candidate elections by corporations and unions and entirely discount any danger from any undue influence other than quid pro quo ("something for something") corruption.

State Senator Peter Wirth has been invited to speak to the Los Alamos League about the First Amendment and campaign finance at Lunch with a Leader on November 17. We will continue the discussion during the consensus meeting on December 10. The LWVUS Campaign Finance Study Committee has assembled a lengthy list of papers addressing the many issues and has published the consensus questions to be considered by local Leagues around the country.

Here is the link to the consensus questions and some helpful readings:
http://forum.lwv.org/sites/default/files/mip_questions.links_1.pdf

Additional papers of interest:
Enforcement of Campaign Finance Law
<http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/article/mip-enforcement-federal-campaign-finance-law>

Hard, Soft, and Dark money
http://forum.lwv.org/sites/default/files/mip_hard_soft_and_dark_money.1_1.pdf

Options for Reform:
[\[resources/article/options-reforming-money-politics\]\(#\)](http://forum.lwv.org/member-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

This is an interesting article about corporate personhood:

http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/januaryfebruary_2015/features/let_us_now_praise_corporate_pe053466.php?page=al
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Barbara Calef

Report of October LWL: Robert Gibson, speaking for the Future Energy Resources Committee

In the July Update
(http://www.lwvlosalamos.org/files/July_2015.pdf) we reported on the presentation of the Future Energy Resources Committee (FERC) to the Board of Public Utilities (BPU).

The BPU accepted the report but has not yet made any decisions about how to proceed. They have created a subcommittee of board members to review the report and make a presentation at their November 18 meeting. The BPU may possibly take action during the December 16 meeting.

Robert Gibson, who served as chairman of FERC, spoke at the October LWL about the report and, more generally, about energy uses and supplies in Los Alamos County (LAC). The analysis excluded LANL activities. Gibson stated that LAC is responsible for about 200,000 metric tons of CO₂ emissions annually, of which more than 40% are associated with electricity, with natural gas and petroleum combustion responsible for the rest. The FERC was not asked to investigate natural gas and petroleum consumption, but they did make some observations regarding those fuels.

The consumption of natural gas, which is mostly used for space heating in LAC, is decreasing very gradually. Encouraging conversion to passive solar heating and solar thermal hot water could lead to a further decrease. Gibson suggested that it might be possible to eliminate

gas distribution by the middle of the century, but noted that LAC has not demonstrated much interest in doing so and is planning to install gas lines for the development of A-19 in White Rock.

The accuracy of the data for gasoline consumption is questionable since drivers can make purchases out of town. However, there was a drop in consumption when the prices were at their peak and Atomic City Transit began to operate. Gibson said that a 100% conversion from gasoline-fueled vehicles to electric drive would eliminate 56,000 metric tons of CO₂ emissions annually, but would increase the demand for electricity and would require re-charging infrastructure.

At present the County and the Laboratory pool their resources under the terms of the Electric Coordination Agreement (ECA). LANL is currently using 80% of the combined electric demand. The agreement expires in 2025 and it is uncertain whether there will be a new one. The County's annual electric consumption has been stable. At present 75% of the power comes from coal and 25-30% from the hydro-electric turbines at Abiquiu and El Vado. Hydro-electric production has declined in recent years due to the drought, but hydro-electric power can anchor LAC after the expiration of the agreement.

The FERC recommends replacing coal with nuclear, local "firm" photovoltaic (PV) and market purchases. Energy storage technology is the big challenge for PV, but one possibility is load-swapping with LANL, which uses more electricity in the afternoon when solar power is generated. Peak use in LAC is during the evening. There is significant opportunity to expand photovoltaic production in the County with increased rooftop PV, an additional solar array at the landfill, and available acreage at LANL.

The Department of Public Utilities is a partner in Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems, which plans to build twelve small reactor modules, perhaps in Idaho Falls, by 2023. The design is safer than conventional reactors and involves a reduced financial risk.

The FERC concluded that there is much work to be done now if the County's electrical supplies are to be carbon neutral by 2040. Decisions about the ECA and the San Juan Generating Station need to be made soon. (As reported in the July Update, the BPU approved re-structuring agreements for the SJGS through 2022 in July, but in 2018 will be presented with an option to extend the contract.) The committee also recommended that additional funding be secured to study system stabilization, which is an issue with increased PV. It is up to the BPU to take action in order to move forward. They will meet next in Council Chambers at 5:30 p.m. on November 18.

The FERC report may be viewed on-line at <http://www.losalamosnm.us/gov/bcc/utilitiesboard/Pages/FERCommittee.aspx>

Barbara Calef

Observer Corps Report

During the October 20 Council meeting County Manager Harry Burgess announced that commercial flights between Los Alamos and Albuquerque were delayed because Boutique Air had not yet purchased an airplane. However, two days later Los Alamos County and Boutique Air announced that flights were available for booking and that service would begin on November 1.

On October 27 the Council adopted an updated panhandling ordinance to be clearer and consistent with state law. They also approved transfer of the Smart House from the Joint Utilities Fund to the General Fund and forgave the \$500,000 liability due from the Joint Utilities Fund to the General Fund. That sum had been lent to the Joint Utilities Fund to help finance the construction of the Smart House. Los Alamos County, which owns the land beneath the house, is in a better position than the Utilities Department to dispose of both house and property for economic development purposes.

Anne Laurent, who was the Director of the Community and Economic Development Department (CEDD), has accepted a position as community development director in Park City, Utah. At the November 3 Council meeting Harry Burgess requested that Council pass a resolution to re-organize the CEDD and Public Works Departments before he begins the search for a new Director. After much discussion, the Council voted 6-1 to approve the resolution, with Councilor Girrens in opposition.

Management of capital projects, facilities, and custodial services will be moved into the Public Works Department. Economic development functions will be moved into the County Manager's Office. The Community Development Department will once again focus on permitting, code enforcement, housing, planning, and zoning. The position of County Engineer will be reinstated and will be charged with supervision of capital projects. A new position of Deputy Public Works Director will

be created to help administer the newly added divisions in the Public Works Department.

Also during the November 3 meeting Council discussed adding a general obligation bond to the November 2016 ballot for the purpose of funding capital improvement projects, especially a recreation center. When Steve Lynne outlined the steps that were followed for the previous round of capital improvement projects, it became clear that there was not much time to make decisions about what items to include, what the costs would be, or even to conduct a needs assessment. At that point Schools Superintendent Kurt Steinhaus was invited to tell the Council what the school board was planning in the way of bond elections. Steinhaus said that there would be a bond election in January 2016 to raise \$2.2 million a year for six years to fund music and athletic programs and maintenance projects for the schools. In January 2017 there will be an election for an \$11 million general obligation bond to pay for major renovations to one of the schools. That bond is eligible for a 42% match from the state, but only if the county stays at full bonding capacity.

Further Council discussion revealed that there was not sufficient support for the November 2016 election deadline. At that point Councilor Chrobocinski proposed a substitute motion directing staff to plan for a vote on a general obligation bond for capital improvement projects by May 2017. That motion passed 6-1 with Councilor Reiss opposed.

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: _____

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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