



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

Volume 69, Number 6
November 2016

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Calendar

- December 1 Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, noon
- December 1 NuScale public presentation, small modular reactors, 6 p.m., Golf Course Meeting Room
- December 10 LWVNM Workshop: "How to be an Effective Citizen Advocate at the Legislature,"
10 a.m.-12 noon, State Capitol, Room 322
- December 20 Lunch with a Leader, Sen. Ivey-Soto, Mesa Public Library, 11:45 a.m.
- January 11 Legislative Preview, 7 p.m. (6:30 for refreshments) location tbd
- January 17 Lunch with a Leader, Karen Williams, Mesa Public Library, 11:45 a.m.
- January 24 Ballot for LAPS GO Bond & UNMLA mill levy due at Office of the County Clerk 5 p.m.
- January 26 Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, noon

Lunch with a Leader: Sen. Daniel Ivey-Soto

On Tuesday, December 20 the speaker will be NM Senator Daniel Ivey-Soto, who was recently reelected for a second term in the State Senate. He will be discussing the election and ethics.

Ivey-Soto represents District 15 in Albuquerque and is a member of the Central New Mexico LWV. Born and raised in Georgia, he is a former NM state elections director, prosecutor, and teacher. Interestingly, Ivey is his father's name and Soto is his mother's. He decided to add her name to his when he was just 14 years old.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

Board Changes

We are sad to report that Wendee Brunish has resigned as our president. The board voted to have Barbara Calef and Becky Shankland serve the rest of the year as co-presidents. Rosmarie Frederickson has volunteered to take over Barbara's job as secretary.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2016-17

Officers

Co-Presidents: Barbara Calef and
Rebecca Shankland

1st VP: *not filled*

Treasurer: Kathy Taylor

Secretary: Rosmarie Fredrickson

Directors

Reservations: Amy Birnbaum

Lunch with a Leader: Karyl Ann Armbruster

Membership: Tarin Nix

Voter Services: Lynn Jones

Board of Public Utilities Observer: Julie
Williams-Hill

Publicity: Jody Benson

Director at Large: Akkana Peck

Off Board Directors

Arrangements: Mary Van Eeckhout

Fundraising: *not filled*

Webmaster: Barbara Lemmick

Assistant Webmaster: Julie Williams-Hill

Observer Corps: Lynn Jones

Newsletter Editor: Kathy Taylor

Nominating Committee: Carroll Thomas, Tarin
Nix

Another New Member!

We were happy to have our newest member participate in our Charter School Consensus meeting. We welcome Rosemary Alme to the League. Rosemary graduated from Rutgers University and later earned her MSW. She worked for 20 years in the area of corrections and then began running the family-owned Research and Development Company.

Co-President's Message

It will be hard to match the inspiration in Wendee's messages about voter suppression, authoritarianism in politics, and equitable funding of education, but I've been reflecting passionately (even angrily) on a similar topic that is dear to the hearts of League members: the corruption of political discourse by money.

Question: How many political messages did you receive daily during the recent campaign?

Question: How many of them used a "survey" or "quiz" that concluded by asking for money?

Question: How many mailers presented a simplistic, negative version of a candidate?

Question: How many of us feel resentment that the only form of political speech that matters seems to be *money*?

The final accounting for this election is not yet available, but we can measure the total amount of money spent by looking at the Federal Election Commission's report for the 2012 election (the total election, not just the presidential). Politico summarized: "Almost \$7 billion was spent by candidates, parties, and outside groups." Broken down into categories, we see that

candidates spent	\$3.2 billion
parties spent	\$2 billion
outside PACs spent	\$2.1 billion.

Politico muses that "the total number of dollars spent on the 2012 election exceeded the number of people on the planet." This observation makes one indignant that so much money can't be used to support people, for instance with education improvements.

Worst of all, one asks what this money buys. Increasingly, it buys distorted, negative caricatures of candidates. Complex issues are reduced to simple-minded slogans. The image of politicians becomes that of attack dogs rather than thoughtful debaters.

To restore dignity and genuine debate to the political scene, the League can be a force that stands above money. Voter guides and candidate

forums provide a level playing field where each candidate has the same number of minutes to respond to the same questions. Character, thoughtfulness, and ideas count - money does not.

Rebecca Shankland

Farewell to Tom Sandford

The League will miss the support of member Tom Sandford, who died September 24 in Albuquerque. Among his many activities were implementing Title IX, running, and involvement in the Historical Society. He asked that his obituary end as follows:

“Gather evidence, think critically...go VOTE!”

Report of November LWL: Bill Hargraves, Andrea Cunningham, Cindy Rooney

On January 4 ballots will be mailed to Los Alamos County voters. The ballots, which must be returned to the County Clerk’s Office by 5 p.m. on January 24, will ask two questions. The first is whether to renew the general obligation (GO) bond for Los Alamos Public Schools capital projects. The second question is whether to provide additional funding for the Los Alamos branch of UNM (UNM-LA).

LAPS GO Bonds

Los Alamos Public Schools (LAPS) Board members Bill Hargraves and Andrea Cunningham explained the importance of the election. GO bonds are only for infrastructure. Due to State law, school districts cannot fund operational expenses such as salaries from local revenues. The community passed bonds in 2009 and 2013 that financed major construction projects at the High School, Middle School, and Aspen Elementary. Among other projects, the Topper Freshman Academy created a separate school for 9th graders in A Wing at the high school. Residents wishing to tour the new facilities may contact the district office at 662-2230.

The HB 33 referendum that passed in February 2016 yields approximately \$2.2 million a year for capital projects. This differs from the 2017 Los Alamos bond, which is a continuation of the existing bond, for \$13 million. Passing it will NOT raise taxes.

The next project planned is to rebuild and remodel Barranca Mesa Elementary. It is rated the fourteenth worst school building in the state! In addition, work will be done on Mountain, Chamisa, and Piñon Elementary Schools. Take a look at the LAPS website (<http://laschools.net/Page/9734>) for details of the past and future projects.

Hargraves and Cunningham reiterated that a “yes” vote will not raise taxes and noted that improved schools add to the vitality of the community.

UNM-LA Mill Levy Election

Cindy Rooney, the Chief Executive Officer of UNM-LA was a professor of accounting until recently. Having spent about twenty years on the campus, she is well aware of the role it serves in the community and the need for an increase in funding. Unlike LAPS, operations at the branch college are not entirely financed by the State. UNM-LA receives 33% of its budget from the Legislature, down from 53% in 2007-2008. Tuitions and fees provide another 23% of the budget. Grants and contracts provide 19% of the funding, 12% comes from sales and services, and the local mill levy provides another 12%. The GO Bond C on the November ballot did pass; it will yield \$500,000 for infrastructure improvements on the campus, but much more is needed for operational expenses.

UNM-LA was established in 1980 with a one-mill bond. In 2013 UNM-LA asked for a two-mill increase, which lost by 246 votes. This time the college is asking voters to approve only a one-mill increase. That would mean a \$100 tax increase for a \$300,000 property. All the other branch campuses have at least a two-mill levy.

Rooney noted that the faculty includes permanent members, 70% of whom have Ph.D.s, and instructors, 76% of whom have either a

Ph.D. or Master's degree. She described some of the many programs offered at the college, including associate degrees and certificates. The school serves as a bridge, offering programs needed by LANL and other parts of the community. 1,794 students are enrolled in academic programs, including 387 dual credit students, 299 of whom attend Los Alamos High School. The college is not allowed to charge those students tuition, yet the state reimburses only 6.4% of the value of their courses. Hundreds more students enroll in summer programs, community education classes, customized training, and programs for adult basic education, high school equivalency, and English language acquisition. The campus also hosts community events such as the LWVLA candidate forums.

Barbara Calef

Observer Corps Reports

County Council

The County Council approved the hiring of our new County Attorney, Joseph Alvin Leaphart. He will be bringing his new wife (as of November 19th) and his dog to Los Alamos from Georgia. He begins work the first of January. We welcome them and wish them well.

In the General Election on November 8th the voters elected Pete Sheehey, Antonio Maggione, and Chris Chandler to fill the three open seats on the County Council. They will begin their terms in January 2017. Two of the three are LWVLA members, so we may have to work on Antonio. Two more League members won election: Anne Nobile won Probate Judge, and Stephanie Garcia Richard was reelected to the NM House. Congratulations to all.

At the November 14th County Council meeting, the Council approved the Comprehensive Plan that has been in the works for many months, and taken dedication and time from county staff, the public and the Council. There was dissension among the Council members regarding a change in the land use map that accompanies the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning and Zoning Commission had changed the designation of two plots of land south of Airport Road and north of the Canyon Rim Trail that had been labelled "Open Space" to "Industrial." The outcome of the Council discussion was to change those two plots to "Mixed Use." Councilor Susan O'Leary voted against the plan because, although she agreed with the "Mixed Use" designation, she felt that the public deserved a chance to comment on the change. The Comprehensive Plan passed with a 4 to 1 vote.

Lynn Jones

Board of Public Utilities

Water

At both the public meeting held on November 15th and the regularly scheduled Board of Public Utilities meeting on November 16th, Daniel B. Stephens and Associates (the contractor for the

Los Alamos Department of Public Utilities) shared findings and answered questions on a draft revised Long-Range Water Supply Plan. Using data from the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of New Mexico, the DPU contractor adjusted the population projections for Los Alamos and adjusted the demand outlook. The contractor also assessed climate change effects and other risks to the water supply and discussed development of the additional 1,200 acre feet of San Juan/Chama water. A copy of the draft plan is available on the DPU website at www.losalamosnm.us/utilities. The draft plan is scheduled to go before the County Council on November 29th. A final plan will go to the Board and Council to be approved in January.

Solar

Also at the November 16th Board meeting, Utility Financial Solutions (another contractor for the DPU) presented a study on the value of solar in Los Alamos. BPU will use this information to determine if an ordinance for a value-of-solar tariff (VOST) should be prepared as an alternative to the existing net metering program. According to UFS, the value of solar in Los Alamos is the second highest value that they have seen. This is because the LANL electric demand peak coincides with the electric generation peak from roof-top solar installations. The avoided costs to the DPU are a little more than 8 cents per kilowatt hour for residential customers and 9 cents for commercial customers. UFS recommended replacing DPU's net metering program with a "buy all, sell all" formula. DPU would buy from the customer 100 percent of the electricity generated from the solar panels using the VOST, and sell 100 percent of the electricity consumed by the customer at the retail rate. Once UFS finalizes its study, the report will be made available on the DPU website. The BPU took no action.

Nuclear

Utilities Manager Tim Glasco reminded the BPU that a public meeting is scheduled for December

1st at 6 p.m. at the Golf Course large meeting room. NuScale Power will discuss its new small modular nuclear reactor technology. DPU is exploring whether or not to add to the County's electric generation portfolio a nuclear project entitled the Carbon-Free Power Project to be constructed in Idaho. This project utilizes NuScale's small modular reactors. A subsequent public meeting will be held on January 12th to discuss the details of the Carbon-Free Power Project.

Julie Williams-Hill



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 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

_____ 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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