



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 7
December 2016

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Calendar

- January 11 Legislative Preview, Fuller Lodge, 7 p.m. (6:30 for refreshments)
- January 12 Carbon-Free Power Project, Fuller Lodge, 6 p.m.
- January 17 Lunch with a Leader, Karen Williams, Mesa Public Library, 11:45 a.m.
- January 24 Ballot for LAPS GO Bond & UNMLA mil levy due at Office of the County Clerk, 5 p.m.
- January 26 Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, noon
- February 8 LWVNM Legislative Reception, Garrett's Desert Inn, 311 Old Santa Fe Trail, SF, 5:30 p.m.
- February 9 LWVNM League Day at the Legislature, State Land Office, 310 Old Santa Fe Trail, SF, 10:30 a.m.

Lunch with a Leader: Karen Williams

On January 17 we will have different, yet very pertinent presentation by Karen Williams. She is a critical care and ER nurse, former military intelligence analyst, and solid back-of-the-pack ultra-runner and triathlete. Last June, while running a trail marathon in the Valles Caldera, she was attacked by a bear that thought her cubs were being threatened. Williams is working with Stephanie Garcia Richard to get a bill passed which will acknowledge the increased likelihood as humans encroach on more land of human/wildlife interaction and deal with the aftermath of these encounters more humanely for both the human and the wildlife.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2016-17

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Rebecca Shankland

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2nd VP: *not filled*

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Nominating Committee: Carroll Thomas, Tarin
Nix

Co-president's Message: New Mexico Ethics Commission? It's About Time!

With the resignation of yet another high-ranking member of the New Mexico state government administration and with huge issues about the president-elect's responsibility to build a firewall between his business affairs and his political initiatives, it's time to talk ETHICS.

This year the NM Legislature will again consider several approaches to ethical accountability. New Mexico is among only NINE states that have no ethics commission. One approach is to amend the state constitution to create an Independent State Ethics Commission.

As Common Cause proposes, the commission would

- oversee the conduct of state officers, employees, campaign finance reporting, contractors, and lobbyists, and
- serve as a resource for officials to get guidance on issues and provide ethics training.

Another approach to a similar goal was outlined by Senator Daniel Ivey-Soto in his talk at Lunch with a Leader last week. He proposes to create an Accountability Board that would enforce regulations related to ethics at both the state and local levels. Having passed a law to create the board, he would then sponsor a constitutional amendment to fund it.

Whatever approach the legislature takes, an ethics commission with comprehensive powers will surely help the citizens to feel that their elected representatives are responsive to them and are trustworthy.

Rebecca Shankland

Legislative Preview

The 2017 session of the legislature begins on January 17 and will last 60 days. Once again the AAUW is co-sponsoring our annual legislative preview. It will be held in Fuller Lodge on Wednesday, January 11, 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. Also, State Senator Daniel Ivey-Soto will return to explain his plan for creating a state accountability board and LWVNM Vice-President Dick Mason will discuss the proposals of the Fairness Project for increasing state revenue.

Barbara Calef

Two League Events in Santa Fe in February

Legislative Reception, February 8, 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, February 8 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. It's a chance to chat with legislators from around the state. James Jimenez, Executive Director of NM Voices for Children will speak about adequately funding essential services.

League Day at the Legislature, February 9

League Day is an opportunity for League members to familiarize themselves with our state government, attend committee meetings, and speak with our legislators. From 10:30 to noon we will assemble at the State Land Office, Morgan Hall, 310 Old Santa Fe Trail, to hear Santa Fe Schools Superintendent Veronica Garcia speak about educational funding issues. Also Julianna Koob, legislative advocate for Planned Parenthood, will speak about current reproductive rights issues.

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

Observer Corps Reports

County Council

At their November 29th meeting the County Council voted to pass a resolution backing Senator Martin Heinrich's efforts to change Bandelier National Monument to a National Park and Preserve. This has historically resulted in increased visitation, a goal of both Bandelier and Los Alamos County.

The Council also heard a presentation of the Revised Long-Range Water Supply Plan for Los Alamos County. This update to the 2006 Long-Range Water Supply Plan was contracted to Daniel B. Stephens & Associates, Inc.

(DBS&A). The consultants considered our current and expected future population, and the expected water demands by both the county and LANL for the next 40 years. Their conclusions were that, barring contamination of our water wells or huge demands for water by LANL, our water needs can be met with our existing wells, assuming normal replacement of wells as needed. Our aquifer is deep, and although we are pulling it down, it is deep enough to handle our withdrawals. Even with considerations of climate change, they felt we were secure.

However, if our wells should be contaminated, we would require the allotment of San Juan Chama water that we have been allocated. The consultant recommended that we begin the environmental impact studies needed in case we should have to quickly capture this water.

At the December 6th meeting of the Council, they passed the Comprehensive Plan for Los Alamos County. This is a major accomplishment by the county and the public, and everyone welcomed a complete, all-in-one, readable plan to use for future planning. It gives the county a handle on what the public and county want with regard to the use of the land.

Lynn Jones

Board of Public Utilities

Small Modular Reactor Presentation

The Department of Public Utilities hosted a public meeting on December 1st on small modular reactor technology developed by NuScale Power. Approximately 70 Los Alamos citizens attended. Speakers included Los Alamos National Laboratory's Director of the Office of Civilian Nuclear Programs Dasari V. Rao, NuScale's Chief Commercial Officer Mike McGough and Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems (UAMPS) Chief Executive Officer Doug Hunter. At the direction of the Board of Public Utilities, DPU is exploring whether or not to add a next-generation nuclear power facility to the County's energy generation portfolio to meet a 2040 goal to be carbon neutral. Through DPU's membership in the UAMPS, DPU is looking at the Carbon Free Power Project that will utilize NuScale's small modular reactor technology. Another meeting is planned for 6 p.m. on January 12th in Fuller Lodge to discuss in detail the Carbon-Free Power Project.

Project to Replace the White Rock Wastewater Treatment Plant

A public meeting was held on December 7th at the White Rock Library with the Department of Public Utilities' contractor Molzen Corbin. The DPU plans to replace the existing White Rock wastewater treatment plant with a modern water resource recovery facility. Clayton Ten Eyck with Molzen Corbin reviewed and answered questions on the Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) and Julie Dickey with Marron and Associates reviewed and answered questions on the Environmental Information Documents (EID). Both the PER and EID are available to be viewed at the White Rock Library at 10 Sherwood Boulevard, and the Customer Care Center or County Clerk's office at 1000 Central Avenue. The documents are also online at the DPU website at www.losalamosnm.us/utilities. Public comments are being accepted until January 1, 2017. Information on how to submit comments is on the DPU website: www.losalamosnm.us/utilities.

Survey on a Community Solar Garden

Los Alamos Department of Public Utilities is conducting an online survey through the “Open Forum” tool on the County website. The five-question survey is designed to gather interest from Los Alamos County citizens for the development of a potential community solar garden.

A community solar garden is an array of photovoltaic panels with multiple subscribers. Subscribers may purchase or lease one or more photovoltaic panels in the array, rather than installing a photovoltaic system at their home. For individuals who want to take advantage of solar power, but live in an apartment or in a home that is shaded by trees, participation in a community solar garden may be ideal. Further, subscribers will be able to sell power back to the DPU just as if the panels were installed at their home, and subscriptions will follow the individual if they move to another location within the County.

Los Alamos citizens can take the survey now through January 8 at <http://www.peakdemocracy.com/4098>.

Julie Williams-Hill

Report of December Lunch with a Leader:

Senator Daniel Ivey-Soto

Daniel Ivey-Soto has been a state senator for four years, representing a swing district in north-east Albuquerque. He was happy to announce that he won the recent election handily despite being the focus of attack mailers. He recognized the other elected officers present at the meeting: Karyl Ann Armbruster, Sharon Stover, Marco Lucero, and councilor-elect Chris Chandler.

Senator Ivey-Soto is the Executive Director for NM County Clerks Affiliate. (He calls that his day job). In the past he served as the Director of State Elections and is very interested in election code. He sponsored the legislation allowing vote centers as well as online voter registration and updates. He argues for uniform voter laws among all states and wants New Mexico to participate in the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), a proactive tool that uses several databases to compare voters across state lines. If the system concludes that a voter is registered in two states, the record is flagged.

Ivey-Soto is also an attorney, and under the umbrella of the League of Woman Voters of New Mexico, of which he is a member, he argued before the Supreme Court that two constitutional amendments intended to update the state election code should take effect. The justices agreed, rejecting the claim that ballot questions from 2010 and 2014 needed 75 percent approval, finding that a simple majority sufficed since neither one restricted voting rights.

As a result, school districts no longer are prohibited from holding elections at the same time as other nonpartisan elections for offices such as mayor and city councilor. The second amendment replaces laws banning “idiots” and “insane persons” from voting and ensures convicted felons’ right to vote after they have completed their sentences. Following the Supreme Court decision in September, Common Cause recognized LWVNM’s achievement with the Best in Government Award for 2016.

During the next legislative session Ivey-Soto plans to introduce a bill allowing all local elections to be consolidated on the same date. He will also sponsor a bill for a state Public Accountability Board to enforce regulations related to ethics at both the state and local levels.

Other concerns include the number of bills declaring an emergency, which the senator says can be used to avoid notice and comment. He wants to pass a bill devising a consistent process to follow in declaring an emergency and a time limit for the rule.

He believes that New Mexico, as the second sunniest state in the country, needs to embrace the new energy economy. Our rural areas could develop and export energy, but to do so, the legislature should promote the development of transmission lines connecting production to the potential consumers in other states.

Ivey-Soto stated that education is underfunded by \$275-300 million in the state. He supports taking the necessary money from the Permanent Fund. Noting that the number of books in a home is directly related to a child's performance and that truancy in school is highest in kindergarten and second highest in first grade, he wants to build a culture of education while respecting the traditional focus on family.

Asked about his thoughts on re-districting, Ivey-Soto jested that, "I'm looking forward to being able to draw the lines myself." He went on to describe some of the alternatives to re-districting by the legislature and concluded that we need an independent re-districting commission with the best interest of the community at heart. Currently most seats are unopposed because the districts are demographically uniform. The goal should be to create as many evenly divided districts as possible.

He does not support term limits as a means of preventing politicians from accumulating too much power. He pointed out that it takes many years to get a bill into law; for instance, he has been working 8-9 years on consolidation of elections. With term limits there is a shift in who holds the power from elected officials to

staff and lobbyists, who are less accountable. "The influence of money does not go away."

Comprehensive financial reform is also needed. There is tremendous corruption due to the lack of transparency. The senator argued for raising the limits on individual donations so that people are less likely to be tempted to funnel funds through a third party. Most disastrous are the super PACs because they are not accountable at all. We need to create a system to give directly to the candidates.

Finally, the senator revealed his long-term plan to address a number of problems with the state government. He would like to see an Accountability Board established by 2019. In 2018 he would like to pass a constitutional amendment to properly fund the board. In 2020 he would like the board to conduct a study to determine how to compensate legislators. Currently, one must be rich, retired, or resourceful (one of the three Rs) to serve in the legislature.

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 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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