



UPDATE

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

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Calendar

- May 16 Lunch with a Leader, Recreation Bond Discussion, Mesa Public Library, 11:40 a.m.
- May 20-21 LWVNM Convention, Santa Fe Hilton, noon-5:30 p.m. on Saturday, 8:30 a.m.-noon
Sunday
- May 23 Recreation Bond ballots are due at the County Clerk's office by 7 p.m.
- May 25 Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, noon

Lunch with a Leader: Recreation Bond

On May 16 we will have a number of speakers to explain the Recreation Bond and the implications. They include Philo Shelton, Director of Public Works, and three members of the Los Alamos Future PAC: Susan O'Leary, Vice-President of the County Council and League member, Councilor James Chrobocinski, and Darren Meadows. Members of the PAC opposed to the bond are also coming. Lunch begins at 11:40 at Mesa Library and concludes around 1 p.m.

In June, LWV will be on the 20th. Our speaker will be League member and State Representative Stephanie Garcia Richard. She will review the regular legislative session and the May special session. Again, more information will be coming out as the time nears.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

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Welcome New Members!

We are delighted to welcome two more new members to our ranks, Shirley Roman and Leslie Wallstrom. We'll hope to send you short biographies of both of them in a later newsletter.

Leslie expressed interest in a number of topics and specifically mentioned a topic the League has worked on: "Gerrymandering--How to end it! Setting up non-partisan committees to establish districts."

Report of April Lunch with a Leader: Sandra Fish

Sandra Fish, a reporter for New Mexico in Depth (NMID), finds much to criticize in our state government. She explained that NMID focuses on transparency issues and there are extensive problems with the way the executive and legislative branches of our government operate. She noted the distinct partisan divide in the Legislature, which seems to be the norm nationwide these days. She said the House Republicans are still running the House even though Democrats are now in the majority.

In New Mexico the legislative process is "pretty poor." Fish has worked in Colorado and Florida and she noted that the legislatures in those states have rules and they follow them. They follow procedures as well. For instance, Colorado has a law that every bill must receive a committee hearing and a vote. Even though their annual legislative session lasts 120 days, that is not long enough for unlimited bills, so they restrict the number to five per legislator, of which three must be introduced in the first few days and heard by a specified date.

There is too much pomp and circumstance, too much wasted time in the NM Legislature. Many bills are filed only to please constituents; the sponsors know they will not be passed. There is a lack of transparency about how the legislators work. For instance, if a committee tables a bill, it's difficult to find out how the members voted. Additionally, a lot of the budget work goes on behind closed doors. The inefficiency of the Senate Rules Committee drew her criticism for its failure to hold hearings on the governor's appointments, or to hear many of the bills assigned to it.

Fish reported that legislators argued over how many details for implementation to put in the constitutional amendment for an ethics commission during the last session. She advised League members to put pressure on the

legislators to support an open process, adding that the word of the week is “disingenuous” and noting that no one knows what happens in the existing Interim Legislative Ethics Committee.

On the other hand, Fish loves the pre-filing that occurs in New Mexico “because those are the serious bills.” She was pleased with the new House rule that floor amendments must be available online so that citizens can learn what is being debated. She noted that Senator Jeff Steinborn has been trying to reform the system. He wants to require lobbyists to say what bills they are advocating for, and to require them to report on aggregate expenditures of less than \$100. His bill was passed during the session, but the governor vetoed it.

Fish described the governor’s performance as “a scorched earth policy.” She delivered the State of the State address and then disappeared for the rest of the session. She vetoed ten bills without a message, which the Democrats say is a violation of the law. After the session ended, she vetoed all spending for the legislature and for higher education. Fish pointed out that it’s possible that the entire higher education system and all the programs under it will go unfunded unless Martinez and the Legislature come to an agreement before July 1 — or the state Supreme Court overturns her vetoes. She added that May 1 is the deadline for higher education institutions to file their budgets.

The governor announced that she would call a special session. At the same time, the Democrats discussed convening an extraordinary session, but that would require the support of 3/5 of each legislative body, and House Republicans are unlikely to support it. Most recently, the Interim Legislative Council, a bi-partisan committee, held a closed session where they voted to sue the governor in the NM Supreme Court.

Fish concluded her talk with several recommendations for citizens as well as legislators. She said we should converse with people we might not agree with to find common

ground on issues. The major issues of concern are poverty, which takes different forms in different parts of the state; economic development; and education.

Throughout her talk, Fish expressed admiration for the League. But she encouraged us to step up the action. She closed asking for suggestions for making government more interesting and understandable and for getting people more engaged.

Barbara Calef

Observer Corps Reports

County Council

The County Council held budget hearings April 16, 17 and April 24, and 25. They heard from each department and the Department of Public Utilities (DPU). In the end the council met their goals for a 2% increase over the previous year’s budget and for maintaining a 20 percent reserve fund. They compromised on what to include and what to exclude. The final vote was 5 -2 because Councilor Izraelevitz and Councilor Maggiore objected to balancing the budget on the backs of the additional staff salary increases, which were needed to keep salaries aligned with salary surveys. And Councilor Maggiore also objected to shorting Public Works the money for additional road improvements while criticizing DPU for not replacing old infrastructure fast enough. Happily, the \$80K place-holder for a nurse to cover the Public Health Office was kept in the budget. Of course, Council still needs to discuss this and come to a final decision.

At the May 2 meeting, County Manager Burgess announced the receipt of a grant that will provide

for the design of a pedestrian/bicycle underpass near Entrada Business Park to connect the Canyon Rim Trail to the north side of NM 501. The underpass is still a couple of years away even assuming the money comes through as anticipated.

Lynn Jones

Board of Public Utilities

At the Wednesday, April 19th Board of Public Utilities (BPU) meeting, BPU members approved a contract for the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) to drill a new drinking water well in Los Alamos Canyon. DPU staff also presented various options for how to proceed with the revised Long-Range Water Supply Plan that was not approved by the County Council. BPU members voted to amend the Plan as recommended by the Council, but to also revisit the water demand projections for the Los Alamos National Laboratory. A new revised Plan is expected by the fall.

Also discussed were various options to replace the White Rock wastewater treatment plant. DPU completed a Preliminary Engineering Report and Environmental Document in 2016 with hopes to have a new plant by 2019. However, evaluation of the wastewater fund finances and the current engineering and construction costs revealed the need to wait two years to generate additional revenue prior to seeking financing for the project. The current estimated cost is approximately \$14 million. DPU staff will return to the BPU in June with more details on the various options that were discussed.

Julie Williams-Hill

Co-President's Message: Social Events for the League?

After a strenuous round of wielding pens and stamps for our thank-you note party at Suzie Havemann's, we had time to consider how to get to know our many new members. Suddenly we realized that we would actually like to get to know our "old" members better, too, and the fruits of our conversation ripened into these suggestions:

- *gatherings at a home--hostess cleans up, others bring refreshments
- *short topic of interest: what's coming up for the League plus a little talk on
- *"The Real Truth about Lobbying at the Roundhouse"
- OR
- *"How Can the League Be Non-Partisan and Support Legislation?"
- OR
- *"What's It Like To Be on the Board of Public Utilities?"
- OR
- a topic of your choice

Let us know what you'd like to discuss or hear about and let the conversations begin!

Becky Shankland



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LOS ALAMOS
MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

Name(s): _____ Date _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail _____

- Check here to receive our newsletter Update as an electronic file, saving us postage.
Check here if you prefer the newsletter 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
Education
Living Wage
Voting Rights/Voter Services
Sustainability
Public Transportation
Public Relations
Newsletter
Study of Transfer of Public Lands
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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