



UPDATE

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

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Calendar

- 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.
- December 16 Board of Public Utilities Meeting, Municipal Bldg., 5:30 p.m.
- January 7 Legislative Preview, Fuller Lodge, 7 p.m. (6:30 for refreshments)
- January 19 Lunch with a Leader, Jenny Parks, Mesa Public Library, 11:45 a.m.
- January 26 Mail-in ballots are due at the County Clerk's Office
- January 28 Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, noon
- February 3 LWVNM Legislative Reception, Garrett's Desert Inn, 311 Old Santa Fe Trail, SF, 5:30 p.m.
- February 4 LWVNM League Day at the Legislature, 311 Old Santa Fe Trail, SF, 10:30 a.m.

Lunch with a Leader: Suki Halevi

Our next Lunch with a Leader will be on December 15 at 11:45 a.m. in Mesa Public Library. Suki Halevi, Director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) for New Mexico, will be our speaker. She will be discussing the ADL in general, but will focus on the issue of voters' rights. The ADL works to combat anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry, defends democratic ideals, and protects civil rights for all.

Growing up in Connecticut, Halevi was inspired by Rabbi Stanley Kessler, a prominent civil rights leader who demonstrated with the Freedom Riders and marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and with Kessler's teacher, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. She completed her BA at Vassar College, her Masters at Tufts, and her law degree at Duke. She came to New Mexico in 2014 from Maui, where she spent seven years working to help native Hawaiians.

In January Jennifer Parks will be our speaker. Parks is the Chief Executive Officer of the LANL Foundation, having succeeded Susan Herrera, who retired last year.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

LWVLA Board 2015-2016

President, Barbara Calef
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Budget, Kathleen Taylor
Newsletter, Kathleen Taylor
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President's Message

The New Mexican has a Thanksgiving tradition of honoring local residents who “use their time, talents and passions to give back to the community.” This year Meredith Machen, President of LWVNM (the state League), is one of the “10 Who Made a Difference.” Read about her accomplishments and her unceasing efforts at:

http://www.santafenewmexican.com/life/features/who-made-a-difference-league-of-women-voters-president-works/article_85ac25c9-9c53-59a2-a296-558912335fb0.html

Barbara Calef

LWVLA Consensus Meeting on Money in Politics

All League members are invited to participate in an important discussion about campaign finance reform, also known as money in politics. The meeting will be held at the Birnbaums' home at 926 Circle Drive in Los Alamos from 7 to 9 p.m. on Thursday, December 10.

The focus will be the consensus questions developed by LWVUS and the objective is to help the League to update its position on campaign finance in order to more effectively lobby the federal government. The questions, which you can find at http://forum.lwv.org/sites/default/files/mip_questions.links__1.pdf, fall into three categories. Part I addresses the goals of campaign finance regulations in terms of democratic values. Part II concerns the extent to which we believe First Amendment protections should apply to various speakers and activities engaged in political campaigns. Part III asks about methods of campaign finance regulation.

Barbara Calef

Important Decisions for the Board of Public Utilities

At the November meeting of the Board of Public Utilities, members David Powell and Jeff Johnson proposed that the board proceed to consider the recommendations of the Future Energy Resources Committee (FERC) and adopt strategic policies for electrical energy resources and distributed electrical generation and rate structure after which the Utilities Department will present a comprehensive plan to implement the policies.

The BPU will meet in Council Chambers on Wednesday, December 16 at 5:30 to discuss and adopt a definition of “carbon neutral” electrical energy. The BPU has already adopted as a strategic goal to be a carbon neutral electric provider by 2040. This is the definition proposed by the FERC:

Electricity distributed to LA County consumers shall be generated or purchased from sources that do not cause any significant net release of carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gases.

• *Caveats:*

§ *Does not necessarily include DOE/LANL*

§ *Carbon emissions during manufacture should be minimized*

§ *Unavoidable carbon-based power should be offset (e.g., by Renewable Energy Credits)*

The League of Women Voters supports the strategic goal and the definition based on the LWVNM position on natural resources which states, “The League supports policies and incentives that reduce greenhouse gas emissions by promoting greater energy efficiency; by developing clean, renewable energy sources; and by encouraging further research on alternatives to the combustion of fossil fuels for energy.” The BPU is currently gathering public opinion on Open Forum. To weigh in, go to <https://www.peakdemocracy.com3282> where you will find the question and background material.

Barbara Calef

2016 Legislative Preview

Our League is coordinating with the American Association of University Women to hold our annual legislative preview in Fuller Lodge on Thursday, January 7, from 7 to 9 p.m. with refreshments at 6:30 p.m. Everyone is invited.

The 2016 session will begin on January 19 and continue for 30 days. The short session is limited to budget items, vetoed legislation from 2015, and legislation that the Governor puts on her call.

Our legislators, Representative Stephanie Garcia Richard and Senators Carlos Cisneros and Richard Martinez, will participate. Also, Kristina Fisher will explain Think New Mexico’s current campaign to fix the NM Legislature’s “Christmas Tree Bill” and former state senator Dede Feldman will discuss her ideas for improving our state government. Judy Prono from AAUW will moderate.

Barbara Calef

Los Alamos Public Schools HB 33 Mill Levy Tax Election in January

On January 4, 2016 Los Alamos County will mail out the ballot for the HB33 referendum for a mill levy tax election for \$2.2 million a year for six years. This is a continuation of a tax that has been in place for years. This all-mail election will not raise taxes for homeowners. Ballots must be received (not postmarked) at the County Clerk’s Office by January 26th.

The referendum pays for necessary items for the schools, including athletic and activities buses, musical instruments, and ADA compliance issues with the school buildings.

Barbara Calef

Two League Events in Santa Fe in February

Legislative Reception, February 3

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 3 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. This is a rare opportunity to chat with lawmakers from around the state! There will also be a talk about budget issues by Richard Anklam, President/Executive Director of the New Mexico Tax Research Institute.

League Day at the Legislature, February 4

Every year the State League organizes League Day for members to familiarize themselves with our state government, attend committee meetings, and advise our legislators about our priorities. From 10:30 to noon at Garrett's Desert Inn we will hear talks by Paul Biderman, member of the Ethics and Campaign Review Board, speaking about the effort to create an Ethics Commission for the state government, and Bill Jordan from New Mexico Voices for Children, speaking about budget and tax policies.

Planning to attend both events?

Garrett's Desert Inn, located down the street from the Capitol, is offering us a special group rate of \$60 plus \$10 per each additional person (not including tax) for any size room based on availability. Call [1-800-888-2145](tel:1-800-888-2145) or [505-982-1851](tel:505-982-1851) to reserve a room. You must reserve your room by January 12 with the code "Swing Vote" to get this discounted rate.

Barbara Calef

Observer Corps Report

At the November 17 County Council meeting, a petition was submitted by Donald Jones requesting that the county pass a resolution supporting the Endangered Species Act. Council requested that staff bring a modified resolution back to council at a future date for further consideration.

In the County Manager's Report that night, Harry Burgess reported that the new parking lot along West Road near the Ice Skating Rink was being completed, and that there were an additional 48 parking spaces in this lot, with a path to the rink.

Watch for a special County Council session on December 8 to continue pushing ahead with the Capital Improvement Projects effort. This may be mainly a meeting to pin down the process to be used to decide on projects, or it may move into actual decision-making.

At the December 1st meeting, the Council discussed the county branding effort that has been underway for several years. Council completed an important part of the process by deciding on both a branding "strapline" phrase and a Los Alamos logo. Atlas Advertising gave a presentation of the choices of strapline and logo, stating that they felt any of the choices would work well for our county, and so left the Council with the job of making the decision. Council chose the citizen favorite "Where Discoveries Are Made" and the logo that spells "Los Alamos" with the first "o" replaced by an idealized atom, and the second "o" having an imbedded leaf pattern. Now the process is expected to proceed quickly, so that use of the logo and brand by the county and interested businesses will start implementation in two or three months.

Lynn Jones

Report of November LWL: State Senator Peter Wirth

Senator Wirth began his talk at Lunch with a Leader with the comment that his paternal grandfather, Cecil Wirth, taught at the Ranch School and his maternal grandfather, John Gaw Meem, designed Fuller Lodge.

When Wirth was elected to the NM House of Representatives in 2004, New Mexico was one of five states with no campaign donation limits. He sponsored successful legislation to establish donor limits of \$2500 per cycle for senators and \$5400 per cycle for candidates for state-wide office.

As we know, the 2010 Citizens United decision upended previous efforts at campaign finance reform. Senator McCain called it “the worst Supreme Court decision in 50 years.” The decision allows unlimited spending by superPACs and permits nonprofit organizations with 501(c) status to forego disclosure of donors, so long as there is no coordination with the candidate or the candidate’s campaign committee. However, in New Mexico, “coordination” is not defined.

Wirth noted that, following the recent Supreme Court decisions, our entire election campaign code needs to be overhauled; it is replete with language that has been determined to be unconstitutional. The Disclose Bill that he has sponsored since 2012 would make some necessary adjustments to New Mexico campaign finance law and would also compel public disclosure of as much information about the campaign spending of PACs and other non-candidate campaign participants as is permitted by the courts. The bill passed the Senate unanimously in 2012 and 2013, but has never been heard on the House floor. In 2015 Rep. Jim Smith sponsored the bill in the House, but it still failed to reach the floor. Senator Wirth commented that groups on both sides are scared about changing the rules. Non-profits don’t want disclosure because it’s more work, plus some donors want to remain anonymous.

Public financing of campaigns in NM is available to candidates for the Public Regulation Commission and Appellate Court. Senator Wirth believes strongly in public financing. In 2013 he sponsored a bill that would have allowed \$100 contributions to be matched four to one by the state. The bill passed, but was vetoed by the Governor.

Wirth also favors creating an ethics commission, which would serve as an educational resource for legislators as well as for enforcement. He supports a constitutional amendment to create the commission. A constitutional amendment does not need Governor’s support, but it does require support by a majority of the members in each chamber of the Legislature.

Regarding current efforts to call a constitutional convention for the purpose of amending the U.S. Constitution to roll back the Supreme Court decisions, Wirth said he is not working with the proponents, but he would vote for the convention because the reality is so bad after Citizens United. He said, “When young people are engaged, I listen.”

He concluded that the best way to get around the campaign finance problems is to convince people that their vote is important. Dark money wins when people don’t vote!

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
Local Government
Health Care
Money in Politics
Website, social media
Other (please suggest)
Education
Living Wage
Voting Rights/Voter Services
Public Relations
Newsletter
Membership
Transportation
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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