



UPDATE

League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

P. O. Box 158, Los Alamos, NM 87544

Website: www.lwvlosalamos.org

Volume 65, Number 7
February 2013

President: Barbara Calef *bfcalef(AT)yahoo(DOT)com*
Newsletter Editor: Kathy Taylor *kathytaylor1000(AT)msn(DOT)com*

Calendar

- February 14 Lunch with a Leader, Mesa Public Library, 11:40 a.m.
- February 28 Board Meeting, PEEC, noon
- March 14 Lunch with a Leader, Mesa Public Library, 11:40 a.m.
- March 25 Fundraising Party, 926 Circle Drive, 7-9 p.m.
- March 28 Board meeting, PEEC, noon
- April 27 Annual meeting, Bethlehem Lutheran Church 9:30-1:30 p.m.

Lunch with a Leader, February 14: Steven Thomas

This month the speaker for Lunch with a Leader will be Steven Thomas, the new Mesa Library manager. Steven grew up in Arkansas where he graduated with a BA in history from the University of Arkansas. He received his MLS in library and information science from the University of Tennessee. His career has taken him all over the United States. He started in Brooklyn, then went to Fayetteville, AR as Director of Operations, then to Charleston WV where he was assistant director of a system of eleven libraries. Just before coming to Los Alamos, he was the assistant director of the Washington County Library System.

Thomas will be talking about e-books and current trends in publishing, and how this is impacting libraries. He will also talk about relevant updates regarding the P.A.T.R.I.O.T. Act and libraries.

We meet in the upstairs meeting rooms at Mesa Library. You may purchase a meal for \$10 or bring your own. If you would like to place an order, please contact Karyl Ann Armbruster at [kaskacayman\(AT\)gmail\(DOT\)com](mailto:kaskacayman(AT)gmail(DOT)com), or call her at 661-6605. Lunch comes from the Co-op and will only be available if you order in advance.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

President's Message

During the January **program planning** meeting, League members expressed a desire to resume the local study of land use and transportation next month following a five-month hiatus. They also expressed concern about the national impact of money on politics and the global impact of climate change on every aspect of our lives.

Come to the **fundraising party** at Janie O'Rourke's home (926 Circle Drive) from 7 to 9 on Monday, March 25, to catch up on the news while addressing letters to prospective donors. Refreshments will be served.

Barbara Calef

Report of January 10 LWL: Tom Ribe

Ribe's January talk focused on the Valles Caldera rather than energy sources in Los Alamos. (Energy will be the topic of Ribe's next LWL talk in April.) He reminded us that the property, formerly known as the Baca Location No.1 or the Dunigan Ranch, was sold to the United States in 2000. Many environmentalists hoped the new acquisition would be placed under the protection of the National Park Service (NPS), but Senator Domenici wanted it to be a self-sufficient entity, supported by grazing, hunting, logging, and mining.

The Valles Caldera National Preserve Act set up the Valles Caldera Trust, a management organization consisting of nine board members, seven of whom are appointed by the President. The other two are the Superintendent of Bandelier and the Forest Supervisor of the Santa Fe National Forest. Under the terms of the Act, the Preserve must become financially self-sufficient by 2020 or it will become part of the National Forest Service. However, the resources are not adequate for self-sufficiency. The annual cost of running the Preserve is about \$4 million. Elk hunting is the most lucrative asset. The science program, run by Bob Parmenter, is also

very successful, attracting people from all over the world.

Ribe is Executive Director of the organization Caldera Action, which seeks improved management for the Preserve and, ultimately, oversight by the NPS. That was a major priority for Senator Bingaman; Senator Heinrich is committed to carrying the legislation during the current session. Supporters feel that the NPS will provide more assistance than the Forest Service as well as a higher level of protection.

Barbara Calef

Observer Corps Report – February 2013

We have a new County Council as of January 1, 2013. Three new councilors have begun their four-year terms – Kristin Henderson, Pete Sheehey and Steve Girrens. They join councilors Geoff Rogers (newly elected Chair), David Izraelevitz (newly elected Vice Chair), Fran Berting, and Rick Reiss. They have their hands full with the budget reductions and Capital Projects decisions they have ahead of them. We wish them well.

There were extended reports and discussions at the January 29th Council meeting concerning the budget shortfall that has resulted mainly from Los Alamos National Laboratory's large reduction in spending due to the uncertainties of the Federal budget. A shortfall of about 6 million dollars is hitting the county this year, and there is expected to be a continuing shortfall in successive years. Council ultimately advised the staff to proceed with budget planning that assumes a cutback in county activities and services, a delay in Capital Improvement Projects, but no increase in revenues until 2015. If needed, in 2015 property taxes might be increased to keep up county services (property taxes were cut in 2011). Nothing is cast in concrete until the staff presents the new budget to the Council in April, and Council votes to approve it in May of this year.

At the February 19th County Council meeting, there will be an in-depth discussion of which Capital Projects will move ahead and which will be deferred. The Council suggested that 12.5 million dollars of CIP be deferred to address the budget shortfall. This meeting will be held at 7 pm in the Community Building, and Council will make a decision at the close of the meeting.

There will be a New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) open house on February 20th from 5 pm to 8 pm at the Community Building. NMDOT folks will describe the proposed alternative for NM 502/Trinity Drive. The alternative deviates from the County's recommendation to the state. This is a chance to ask questions, and to make your concerns known. This project is approaching a final stage since the Council is eager to use appropriated funds from the state before they expire, and so plans to move ahead expeditiously. Check out the county website at losalamosnm.us and follow the links to Projects, then Public Works Projects, and then NM502.

Lynn Jones

Legislative Preview

Helena Whyte did a fine job of moderating the annual preview co-sponsored by the League and the AAUW. Our new representative, Stephanie Garcia Richard, announced that there are 31 freshman legislators this year. Among the issues that she is following are education reform measures such as an improved teacher evaluation system and increased funding for early intervention to reduce the need for third grade retention. Garcia Richard also hopes the Legislature will remove loopholes in the DUI law, perhaps by requiring use of a home photo breathalyzer that provides greater proof of compliance than the ignition interlock.

Senator Carlos Cisneros has served in the legislature for 27 years. He would like to use the new funds available this year to compensate for some of the recent cuts in public safety, health

care, education, the judiciary, and especially pre-K. He also wants revenue neutral tax reform. Senator Richard Martinez pointed out that he was the original sponsor of the driver's license for undocumented immigrants in 2004 and said that he supports the League's priorities.

Richard Mason of *Health Action New Mexico* began by encouraging the members of the audience to thank the Governor for approving Medicaid expansion so that it will extend coverage to an additional 170,000 New Mexicans, and provide 5,000-8,000 new jobs in health care. However, the Governor's plan for the New Mexico Health Insurance Exchange (HIE) did not meet with approval by health care advocates because it gave too much power to the insurance companies and allowed insufficient consumer representation. The HIE, which must be in effect on January 1, 2014, will cover 80,000-100,000 residents. *Health Action* is working to have a bill introduced that will assure that the exchange protects consumers, not the insurance companies.

Marcela Diaz of *Somos Un Pueblo Unido* stated that the purpose of the driver's license for undocumented immigrants is to make sure that drivers know the rules of the road, have adequate eyesight, and can buy insurance. Also, the licenses facilitate law enforcement, enabling the police to trace lawbreakers more easily. Her arguments must have been persuasive because the bills to limit the issuance of the licenses have been tabled.

Barbara Calef

LWVNM Reception for Legislators and League Day

The LWVNM priorities this year are re-districting, elections, and health care. This was the second year that the state League held a reception for legislators to meet League members and learn about our concerns prior to the annual League Day at the Legislature. The speakers at the reception included Denise Lamb, the Santa Fe Elections Director. Lamb gave a presentation on Wisconsin's non-partisan Governmental Accountability Board, which is responsible for election administration and for campaign finance, ethics and lobbying regulation in that state. The Wisconsin system contrasts with that of many other states, where elections are administered by partisan officials.

Diane Wood of Common Cause and Josephine Porter of LWVNM spoke about the proposed legislation related to elections during this session. There are bills to permit young people to register if they will be 18 by the next election and bills to make voter registration more accessible. Senator Wirth has two bills to address the changes in our campaign finance law necessitated by the Citizens United decision. Both Common Cause and LWVNM oppose legislation requiring a photo ID for voting. Porter pointed out that over 180 bills to restrict voting have been introduced in 41 states in recent years, but the effort to disenfranchise minority voters has been stymied by many governors and by the courts. She added that evidence of in person impersonation of voters, the excuse for the requirement, is virtually non-existent.

The League Day talks addressed health care and re-districting. Nandini Kuehn, President of NM Health Care Connections, explained the next steps in implementing the Affordable Care Act in New Mexico, expressing optimism that, twelve months after Governor Martinez vetoed the Health Insurance Exchange legislation that the advocacy community had worked to pass, an acceptable compromise is imminent.

Ruth Hoffman, Director of Lutheran Advocacy, pointed out that the rate of home ownership in New Mexico is among the highest in the country because it includes mobile homes. Her focus is on people living in poverty; she supports legislation to increase appropriations for affordable housing, childcare assistance, and other projects to help raise people out of poverty.

During the past year a group of League members studied the options for improving the re-districting process in New Mexico. The result of their investigation strongly influenced HJR 4, which calls for a constitutional amendment to create a re-districting commission independent of both the Legislature and the Governor. Senator Bill O'Neill, the sponsor, explained how the new law would work and asked for League support in getting it passed before the next census. Mary Wilson, past President of LWVUS, added her critique of the 2011 re-districting process that cost the state \$8 million; she emphasized the essential requirements for fair re-districting: a good population count, formalized transparency and public participation, partisan-neutral re-districting criteria, honoring communities of interest if practicable, and a commission composed of ordinary citizens, not judges.

To follow League activities during the legislative session, go to <http://www.lwvnm.org/>.

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.

IN THIS ISSUE

Page

Calendar	1
Lunch with a Leader, February 14: Steven Thomas	1
President's Message	2
Report of January 10 LWL: Tom Ribe	2
Observer Corps Report, February 2013	2
Legislative Preview	3
LWVNM Reception for Legislators & League Day	4
Membership Form	5