



# UPDATE

**League of Women Voters of Los Alamos**

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

**Website: [www.lwvlosalamos.org](http://www.lwvlosalamos.org)**

Volume 63, Number 2  
July 2010

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## ***Calendar***

NOW Dues are due if you didn't pay in April  
July 12 County Meeting to discuss capital projects, Community Building, 6 p.m.  
July 22 Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, noon  
August 10 Possible Lunch with a Leader: watch for Friendly Reminder  
August 26 Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, noon  
August 31 Last Day for Candidates to Withdraw from General Election  
Early October LWVNM and LWVLA Voters' Guide published; candidate forums

## ***Dues Due!!***

If you have not paid your renewal dues for the League of Women Voters-Los Alamos in 2010, please do so today. Your dues expired at the end of April. We know you appreciate the work of your local League, and we have had excellent feedback on the forums we sponsored in May, so we hope you will again show your support for the local League by renewing. Please print the membership form in the newsletter and send it with your check today. If you have any questions, or would like to receive the form by mail, contact Kyle Wheeler, 662-5577, [ktw\(AT\)newmexico\(DOT\)com](mailto:ktw(AT)newmexico(DOT)com).

*Kyle Wheeler*

## ***President's Message***

I served for the first time as a pollworker for the primary elections on June 1. It was a very long day, fourteen hours to be precise, and not particularly busy. Over 300 people voted at UNMLA that day. No more than five voters were present at any time, so there were no lines. We did turn away some people. Three were at the wrong polling place (one of them was registered in Santa Fe.) But the most common reason for denying someone a ballot was that he or she had chosen not to name a major political party when registering. If you are registered as an Independent or a Green, or chose No Party, you may not vote in the primary. It is easy to change your registration at any time, except during the 4 weeks before an election. Just visit the County Clerk's office at 2451 Central Avenue, Suite D, or call 662-8010.

As noted in the May newsletter, the New Mexico Environment Department is seeking an Outstanding Natural Resource Waters (ONRW) designation for wilderness areas in an effort to prevent further degradation by activities such as mining and cattle grazing. LWVNM has written to NMED Director Ron Curry in support of the designation. LWVLA is also seeking approval from the County Council. Tony Mortillaro brought the matter to the attention of the State and Regional Committee of the Council. They sent the request to the Board of Public Utilities, which met on June 16. Mark Jones and I attended the meeting to explain the proposal and how it would benefit the state. The board then voted unanimously to ask the Council to support the ONRW designation for wilderness areas for the sake of protecting water quality. The NM Water Quality Control Commission hearing is scheduled to begin on September 14.

*Barbara Calef*

## ***Highlights of LWVNM Council Meeting, May 2010***

Representatives from all four New Mexico Leagues attended the LWVNM Council, chaired by President Kathy Campbell of Los Alamos, on May 15, 2010, at the Santa Fe Hilton. Rosmarie Frederickson and Becky Shankland attended on behalf of Los Alamos since Barbara Calef was unavailable.

Highlights were

- \* Budget: the LWVNM treasury is in good shape; no reduction in the current PMP (per member payment) of \$12, but encouragement to use allocated funds to support active lobbying efforts.
- \* 2010-11 calendar: a unit needs to be arranged for local Leagues to explore a Santa Fe position on Transparency in Government that could be adopted by the state League by concurrence (not consensus, which requires a complete study)
- \* 2010-11 calendar: a unit needs to be arranged for local Leagues to consider updating the Natural Resources position, which has not been updated since 1987. Volunteers are needed from local Leagues. Mark Jones is representing LWV of Los Alamos.
- \* Grant from LWVUS for voter protection for \$1000: the group voted to give this money to Common Cause for its already-begun work; The League's assistance should be acknowledged publicly.

*Becky Shankland*

## **LWVUS Convention in Atlanta**

This year there was no delegate from Los Alamos at the National Convention. Here is a summary of the most notable actions taken there in June. To read all the actions taken, go to [http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Council\\_and\\_Convention&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=15548](http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Council_and_Convention&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=15548).

The delegates voted for two national studies.

The first will be a study of the federal role in public education, focusing on the role of the federal government in education policymaking, with possible consideration of funding, common standards and/or governance relationships among all levels of the government.

The second study concerns privatization: the policy to transfer government functions, services and assets to the private sector.

The Convention also adopted three positions by concurrence on the convention floor:

- An updated [Arms Control Position](#).
- An addition to the LWVUS position on selection of the president supporting the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished.
- An addition to the LWVUS Equality of Opportunity position: “The League of Women Voters of the United States supports equal rights for all under state and federal law. The LWVUS supports legislation to equalize the legal rights, obligations, and benefits available to same-gender couples with those available to heterosexual couples. LWVUS supports legislation to permit same-gender couples to marry under civil law. The League believes that the civil status of

marriage is already clearly distinguished from the religious institution of marriage and that religious rights will be preserved.”

The Convention passed six resolutions:

- To support lifting the travel restrictions for Americans going to Cuba.
- To call upon the Board to use the resources of the League to support and lobby for significant strengthening of appropriate regulation, oversight, inspection, and penalties associated with the development of fossil fuel resources.
- To call upon the Senate to change its rules to limit the use of the filibuster.
- To add the principle of TRANSPARENCY to the SARA Resolution (having to do with voting machines), as adopted by the LWVUS Convention of 2005. Revised to include the following Principles: Security; Accuracy; Recountability; Accessibility; and Transparency.
- To call upon the LWVUS Board to advocate strongly for bills that legislate for improved Medicare for all.
- To call upon the LWVUS to highlight the need for those responsible for the oil spill to be held accountable.

*Barbara Calef*

## **The Challenges of Passing Ethics Reform Legislation in New Mexico -**

### **Fred Nathan Speaks at LWVNM Council**

The challenges of passing ethics legislation in New Mexico were highlighted by Fred Nathan, founder and executive director of *Think New Mexico*, when he spoke at the May LWVNM Council luncheon. As described by Fred, Think New Mexico is a results-oriented think tank that focuses on solutions, not ideology, and white

papers aren't issued unless there will be follow-up action such as drafting relevant legislation. They've also added a grassroots component via their website and social networks.

*Think New Mexico's* past campaigns have included making full-day kindergarten accessible to every child in New Mexico; repealing the state's regressive tax on food; creating a Strategic Water Reserve for our rivers; changing the state lottery so that millions of dollars a year go to full-tuition college scholarships rather than to excessive administrative costs; and seeing that title insurance rates were lowered to reduce closing costs for homebuyers and homeowners refinancing their mortgages.

*Think New Mexico* is currently addressing "pay to play" state politics. As part of this process, they traced its history and found examples of "play to pay" throughout the years, from pre-statehood days to the present time. The examples included a letter from President Theodore Roosevelt (an advocate for New Mexico statehood), which showed his frustration with political corruption in the New Mexico Territory, and the Lincoln County War, which began as a political fight in the late 1870s over control of government contracts for meat.

A subsequent mapping exercise by *Think New Mexico* revealed two major "pay to play" commonalities: lobbyists and contractors. They also looked at what other states are doing to prohibit political contributions by lobbyists and contractors as well as some of the things they are learning, e.g., that most lobbyists would rather not get into a bidding war and would rather win on merits, and that some legislators want to concentrate on the case that's being presented instead of thinking about who the people are, who they're representing, and whether they've contributed anything. Another point is addressing the problem as soon as it happens, thereby sending a message that the action won't be tolerated.

Fred believes that New Mexico is now moving in the right direction, and cited the Gift Act as a good start. It prohibits individuals and

organizations that stand to receive direct and substantial financial benefits from the state from giving gifts worth more than \$250 to state officials, candidates, or employees. In looking at constitutional law, *Think New Mexico* discovered that courts routinely upheld laws that are narrowly tailored to fighting corruption and that didn't get into broader free speech issues. *Think New Mexico* is recommending that legislation be enacted that prohibits contractors, seekers of government subsidies, and lobbyists from either making or bundling political contributions to state or local elected officials who have the power to influence the contract or subsidy. Although it is still a challenge to get legislation through the various legislative committees involved, Fred feels that these reforms have the potential for strong bipartisan support.

*Restoring Trust: Banning Political Contributions from Contractors and Lobbyists*, a 28-page *Think New Mexico* publication, is available to League members who don't already have a copy. [Their address is 1227 Paseo de Peralta, Santa Fe, NM 87501, the telephone number is (505) 992-1315, and they can be emailed at [info@thinknewmexico.org](mailto:info@thinknewmexico.org). Their website address is [www.thinknewmexico.org](http://www.thinknewmexico.org).] Fred also expressed his appreciation for the League's work in New Mexico and for our collaboration with Think New Mexico on issues of common concern. And by the way, his mother is a League of Women Voters member!

*Jennice Fishburn, LWVCNM*

## **Cas Mason Discusses NNM Citizens' Advisory Board**

At our Lunch with a Leader on May 11, retired LANL chemist Cas Mason gave us many insights into the functions of the Northern New Mexico Citizens' Advisory Board, of which she is a board member.

The NNM CAB was instituted to provide a means for local citizens to give and receive information about their environmental concerns

in DOE-affected areas. The citizens on the board represent tribes, interest groups, civic groups, surrounding communities, and other CABs (representing other nuclear facilities in the US). Other members include the NM Environment Department, DOE, LANL, and other federal regulatory agencies.

Issues that have come before the CAB are the safeguarding of water supply (where oil contamination of older wells was mitigated by using compressed air), clean-up of legacy contamination at sites like MDA-G (Material Disposal Area G on Pajarito Road), and risk management and budget prioritization decisions.

The NM Environment Department's Consent Order mandates a clean-up schedule that is now being supported by ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) funds at TA-21.

Cas emphasized that since all parties are at the table, information can be exchanged. It's a healthier form for communication than random ranting in newspapers or other public meetings.

She urged citizens to attend the board meetings, which are always open to the public, and provide their input or just observe.

For further information and dates of upcoming meetings go to <http://www.nmcab.org/>

*Becky Shankland*

## **Charter Review Committee**

The Charter Review Committee (CRC) has made significant progress in completing the assignment from the Council to examine and review the issues associated with the two recent petitions for amendments (sections 705 and 706) to the County Charter. At the January 23, 2010 meeting, the Council was advised by the County Attorney that the proposed amendments, as written, were not legal. The CRC, in cooperation with County staff and the public, first sought to understand the underlying issues that stimulated the petitioner's proposed amendments and then to consider possible

Charter amendments that would address those issues.

The CRC, through the Issue Identification Subcommittee (Chris Chandler, Jim Hall and Robert Pelak), developed a list of underlying issues that are of concern to the petitioners. The Subcommittee report (See County web site) lists three issues relevant to the underlying motivation for the section 705 proposed amendment (pertaining to citizen involvement in large County projects) and two for the 706 proposed amendment (pertaining to the petition process).

Section 705 related:

1. The perceived need for improved communication and increased transparency in County government.
2. The perceived need for voters to have more control over major County projects.
3. The perception of excessive spending and high taxes in Los Alamos County.

Section 706 related:

1. The perception that County government improperly takes an advocacy position.
2. The belief that the petition process needs clarity and improvement.

The CRC concentrated first on the Charter Section 705 issues and deferred consideration of those associated with Section 706.

The CRC formed two Issue Analysis Subcommittees. The first, called CRC-1, addressed the first 705 concern of the Issues Identification Report (...transparency and communication...). The members are David Izraelvitz, Robert Pelak, Larry Warner (chair) and Kyle Wheeler. The second subcommittee, CRC-2, was assigned to the second issue in the report (...voter ... control over major County projects...). The members of this subcommittee are Chris Chandler (chair), Harry Ettinger and Morrie Pongratz.

Both CRC-1 and CRC-2 held four hearings each in order to invite public input on potential solutions and to discuss the feasibility and impacts of suggested approaches. In addition, the whole CRC sponsored public fora at two regular CRC meetings (March 15 and April 12) to review the work of the subcommittees and to further brainstorm solutions to the issues.

The CRC subcommittees assigned to the issues made tentative recommendations to the CRC on April 15. Several subcommittee meetings were held in May to refine recommendations based upon their analysis of the issues and upon public input and discussion. The refined recommendations were presented to the CRC on June 7.

The CRC subcommittees have gathered useful information on public concerns. While the solutions to most problems will not involve Charter changes, the CRC is compiling a list of issues and public-orient enhancements for the Council's consideration whether or not they are Charter related.

For example, the CRC noted that the Los Alamos County Vision Statement, which was adopted on March 26, 2002, has as the first item a commitment to "Engage Citizenship." In addition, on July 19, 2005, the County Council adopted the Los Alamos County Policy Plan. The Policy Plan says, with regard to Engage Citizenship, "In refining and implementing this vision, our government will be responsive to the community by actively engaging all citizens, young and old, in planning and governance."

While the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) process is a significant step in the right direction with regard to the implementation of the Policy Plan there remains a lot of work to be done to achieve the goals that the community set for themselves in 2005. A more successful effort to engage the public at an early stage in the construction process would go a long way toward meeting the desires of many of those concerned with the size and scope of many county capital projects. What makes this difficult is that it is not easy to engage the

citizens, even with the County's best efforts. We intend to make a recommendation to the Council regarding further action on this plan.

The 705 petitioners sought a Charter change that would have required that many capital projects be placed on the ballot annually for voter approval. CRC-2 considered several options that would have required voter approval of certain "large" capital projects (\$10 -15M); however in May, a County Attorney's opinion determined that the options under consideration would not be legal under State law. In July the CRC will make specific recommendations to the Council regarding the 705 issues.

NOTE: This piece discusses a major effort of the Committee since January. In addition to this activity the Committee has focused on other Charter issues. For the next newsletter, we will update the League on November ballot questions relating to certain "clean-up" Charter amendments" and other areas of review in which the Committee is engaged.

*Chris Chandler and John Hopkins*

## **Observer Corps**

The County Council will hold a special meeting on Monday, July 12, at 6 p.m. in the Community Building. This is the meeting to discuss four capital projects:

- White Rock Visitor's Center and RV Parking
- Golf Course Community Building
- North Mesa Ball Field Light Upgrades
- Historical Archives/County Records

Let them know how you feel about these projects!

*Becky Shankland*



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
OF LOS ALAMOS  
MEMBERSHIP FORM 2010-2011**

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

Check payable to LWV Education Fund  
enclosed (separate check please):

\_\_\_\_\_ Tax-deductible contribution: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name:

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Address:  
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Phone:

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e-mail:  
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\_\_\_\_\_ Check here if you do NOT want to receive  
electronic notification of upcoming  
League events

\_\_\_\_\_ Check here if you are willing to receive  
our local newsletter Update as an  
electronic file, saving us postage.

Check payable to LWV - Los Alamos enclosed  
to include:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Sustaining membership: \$75
- \_\_\_\_\_ Regular single membership: \$45
- \_\_\_\_\_ Household sustaining membership (two+  
people at the same address): \$95
- \_\_\_\_\_ Regular household membership (two+  
people at the same address): \$65
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unrestricted contribution (not tax  
deductible): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Interests (check as many as apply):

- \_\_\_\_\_ One-time activities (unit meetings, fund-  
drive mailings, "Lunch with a Leader,"  
etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Affordable Housing
- \_\_\_\_\_ Membership
- \_\_\_\_\_ Arrangements (refreshments, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Newsletter
- \_\_\_\_\_ Budget
- \_\_\_\_\_ Observe County meetings
- \_\_\_\_\_ Public Relations
- \_\_\_\_\_ Election Reform
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sustainability
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fund Drive
- \_\_\_\_\_ Voter Services
- \_\_\_\_\_ Voters Guide
- \_\_\_\_\_ Local Government
- \_\_\_\_\_ Website
- \_\_\_\_\_ "Who's in Charge" publication
- \_\_\_\_\_ Not sure (just support LWV)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please suggest)

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*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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