



UPDATE

League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

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Calendar

- October 13 Lunch with a Leader: Bandelier Superintendent, Jason Lott, Central Avenue Grill, 11:45 a.m.
- November 8 Education Unit Meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- November 10 Lunch with a Leader: Katy Korkos and Don Taylor, Central Avenue Grill, 11:45 a.m.
- November 15 Education Unit Meeting, 5-7 p.m.
- October 24 Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, noon

Lunch with a Leader, October 13: Jason Lott

On October 13, the speaker at Lunch with a Leader will be Jason Lott, Superintendent of Bandelier National Monument. Lott will be talking about the future of the park since the fire. Because I will be gone in October and November, Becky Shankland will be taking the RSVPs for both those months. You will get the usual e-mails. IF you would like to be called each month because you do not have e-mail, that would be fine. Just call me at 661-6605 and leave a message. After November I would be happy to call you. Also, look in the Monitor for reminders and an article about the person who will be presenting.

Our luncheons are always on the second Thursday at Central Avenue Grill from 11:45-12:45. We have been getting a good number of people there and we certainly hope more and more people attend. One learns so much from our speakers!

*Karyl Ann Armbruster
LWL Coordinator*

2011 Special Election General Obligation Bond for a Leisure Pool at the Aquatic Center

The Leisure Pool Project is a proposed addition to the Larry R. Walkup Aquatic Center that has been in the works as a Capital Improvement Project (CIP) since April of 2009. Both the Parks and Recreation Board and the CIP Evaluation Oversight Committee have endorsed construction of this project.

This summer the County Council decided to fund the \$6.1million project for the Leisure Pool with a \$3 million General Obligation Bond, plus \$3.1 million from existing budget resources. Los Alamos County currently has no G.O. Bond debt, which is financed through an increase in property taxes. One bit of information that people appreciate knowing is the resulting increase in property tax from this particular bond debt. The conservative cost estimate is that a house whose value is \$300,000 (assessed value \$100,000) would see an annual property tax increase of \$32.35.

Since the \$3 million General Obligation Bond is subject to a vote of the people, there will be a special election on November 9, 2011. The county will be mailing out an informational newsletter about this election during the week of October 10th, so watch your mailboxes. The ballots will be mailed out the week of October 17th, and must be returned to the Los Alamos Clerk's office by 7 p.m. on Wednesday, November 9. For election details, go to the County Clerk's web page at www.losalamosnm.us/clerk and click on "2011 Special Election" in the left-hand column. For more general information about the Leisure Pool, go to the county web page (www.losalamosnm.us) and watch for the Aquatic Center Leisure Pool picture to flash into the top frame, and click on "Click Here".

Many citizens have worked tirelessly to bring about a leisure pool for young and old citizens, and this is their final opportunity. So watch for your ballot in the mail, and vote as you see fit.

Lynn Jones

LWVUS Education Study

The LWVUS is conducting a study of the role of the federal government in public education (pre-K through grade 12): the history, funding and equity issues addressed under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; and the non-federal, but national, common standards and assessments required by many federal grant programs. For two years, there has been a lively discussion group reviewing books and articles on the five major topics chosen by the Study Committee. Members can read five issue briefs on www.lwvlosalamos.org. **Additional articles are available at** <http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=112&ContentID=16956>.

We are being asked to review the topics as they relate to the consensus questions, to determine our responses, and send in our recommendations to the national Education Study Committee by Nov. 30. The national League will compile and tabulate the results and present a position statement for final approval by the LWV Convention delegates in June 2012. Once the League develops the national education position, it will be used for advocacy on issues we believe are important for our children's future. **The Los Alamos League will hold two unit meetings on these topics, to be held from 5 to 7 p.m. on November 8 and 15.**

Meredith Machen, the LWVNM Education Director, is compiling summaries of the study material for League members to read prior to attending the meetings. Although the study focuses on the federal government, it was the original intent to include the Common Core Standards written and funded by the National

Governors' Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The discussion here will focus on how these new standards will be used by the federal government.

Common Core Standards

The Common Core Standards provide the best background to preparing for the consensus questions on the role of the federal government in public education. Among the recommended articles on this topic is a 14-page paper prepared by Janelle L. Rivers, Ph.D., for the League of Women Voters' two-year study, available at the link above. It summarizes "efforts to improve consistency in academic expectations, assessment procedures, achievement standards, evaluation practices and accountability systems across the nation." At our November 8 meeting we will discuss the Common Core State Standards Initiative and the pros and cons of a common base curriculum and common assessments.

The set of standards has been adopted by all of the states and territories except Alaska and Texas. However, many think the federal government should not standardize K-12 curricula and assessments based on the Common Core. In addition to states' rights, opponents cite the cost and difficulty of agreeing upon and changing texts and assessments, training teachers and administrators, and informing students and parents about new expectations.

Our charge is to decide whether or not we want the national League to advocate for a mandatory curriculum and assessments to support standard educational expectations and outcomes. As we all know, educational opportunities differ across classrooms, school districts, cities, states and regions. The United States has no uniform set of academic standards for grades K-12, and high school graduation requirements vary widely across the nation. Each state sets its own standards for academic achievement, and states develop, publish, administer, score and report on their own tests, so standards for performance depend upon where students live. Students in

areas with low expectations are frequently unprepared for college and careers and are at a disadvantage in the global economy.

The 2001 law No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is criticized as being too punitive, prescriptive and narrowly focused. Nonetheless, standardized testing has helped identify inequities and achievement gaps. In the blueprint for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the U.S. Department of Education proposes modifying the state-by-state accountability measures by reporting graduation rates and measures of academic growth on common educational standards for grades K-12. Currently with NCLB, states are required to report results of their own state assessments and face consequences if they fail to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Schools that consistently fail to meet their targets face a series of increasingly onerous sanctions including allowing students to transfer to successful schools, paying for their transportation, offering tutoring at public expense, and eventually restructuring the school, replacing the principal and staff, and relinquishing control to private management or the state.

Most educators believe that New Mexico will benefit from the research on improving achievement, but should states where more students are making AYP have to standardize their educational experiences to conform to the Common Core? What should be the role of the federal government with respect to accountability and pooling resources? Do we need a solid way to measure learning outcomes so that we can address inequities and change what we're doing when it's not working? Do we need the education law of the land to have incentives or disincentives in order to make the kind of progress we want to see?

While the Common Core has created an opportunity to achieve consistency and raise standards, it challenges the latitude that local educators have to determine curriculum and set

standards. Though states would have leeway on 15% of the curriculum, many question how the resulting scores might be used or misused, especially with historically underachieving groups. As revision of the ESEA looms on the horizon, we need your help to determine to what extent the League will recommend that the federal government support and regulate public education standardized testing to identify inequities and achievement gaps.

Meredith Machen

LWVNM Alcohol Study

Dee Watkins, Resource Committee Chair for the LWVNM Alcohol Study, is looking for volunteers to help investigate the major issues and concerns regarding alcohol in our area. If you are interested, please contact her at [d Watkins2\(AT\)earthlink\(DOT\)net](mailto:d Watkins2(AT)earthlink(DOT)net).

Barbara Calef

November and December Lunch with a Leader

On November 10, our leaders will be Katy Korkos and Don Taylor. This will be a little different as they will be discussing a conference Don attended and bringing ideas to us about how to help Los Alamos grow and prosper.

In December, DPU Conservation Coordinator Christine Chavez will talk with us about energy conservation/ savings. In fact, I will have had an energy audit two days before our luncheon and Christine can share what I need to do to make my house more energy efficient!

Karyl Ann Armbruster

Report of August 11 Lunch with a Leader: Jim Hall

Jim Hall reported that 70% of his district went up in flames in the Las Conchas Fire, two weeks after the Governor appointed him to represent House District 43. His first task in office was to secure assistance for those constituents affected by the fire, including Dixon's Apple Orchard.

Hall explained that his next challenge would be to preserve his district during the redistricting process. According to the 2010 census, the 43rd district has a population of 27,000, but needs to be within 5% of 29,415. In the big picture, Las Cruces and the west side of Albuquerque gained population while eastern New Mexico lost significant numbers.

Since taking office, Hall learned that redistricting is not a transparent process. He was told that he would not have any effect because the Speaker and the President Pro-Tem determine the outcome. The rest is "froth". He was hoping that a rational, well thought-out argument could have an impact. His goal is to keep Los Alamos a unified district.

A long-term goal of Hall's is to change the way the state budget is funded. The federal government has been our customer, contributing \$175-200 billion, or one-third of the gross domestic product per year. But because the federal government is planning to cut spending, it is important to increase the number of jobs in private industry and to promote the growth of the state's many successful small firms to mid-size.

Barbara Calef

Report of September 8 Lunch with a Leader: Tom Nagawiecki

Tom Nagawiecki, Environmental Services Specialist with Los Alamos County with responsibility for recycling and the Sustainability Initiative, explained that the County outlined eight areas in its 2008 Environmental Sustainability Initiative document and is currently developing indicators (i.e., measurable quantities such as per capita residential energy use) with baselines that will be used to track future progress.

Tom discussed waste reduction and energy efficiency. Los Alamos generates 7200 tons of waste per year (enough to fill a four-mile line of trash trucks), plus 1276 tons of recycled waste. Nationally, and probably locally, more than half of the waste (including recyclable) consists of paper and organics (split about equally between food waste and yard waste), while plastics, metals, a category labeled “rubber, leather, textiles”, wood, glass and “other” (including electronic waste and asphalt) account for diminishing shares. Los Alamos has curbside programs for some paper, plastic and metal wastes as well as programs at the Eco-Station for books (to recycle the material: to recycle as books, the library book store is suggested), yard waste, electronics, hazardous waste, tires and more. The “single-stream” curbside recycling program increases participation rates, but means that the County spends as much or more to dispose of the material collected than it does to dispose of trash, since it is sent to a sorting facility in Santa Fe.

Tom emphasized individual action in his talk, along with the mantra “reduce, reuse, recycle” that makes it clear that recycling is the last option. Ideas floated for waste reduction included: keep chickens to process food waste; give shredded paper to the animal shelter; pressure retailers to minimize plastic packaging; use your own coffee cup at Starbucks; and bring your own container for leftovers at a restaurant.

Also, print on the blank sides of paper, and make garden paths of newspaper or corrugated cardboard covered with mulch. Washing and reusing plastic bags does in fact save money over the lifetime of a plastic bag, but consider reusing glass jars instead.

Currently the Eco-Station is not composting because of complaints about the smell. The County is investigating “in vessel” composting alternatives. They do want to continue composting sludge, which in New Mexico is classified as a “special waste” and is expensive to dispose of. The stables are also looking at some alternatives, although a proposal for methane generation turned out to have very high upfront costs and further composting of the residual material would be necessary.

Nationwide, almost half of all energy consumed by households is used for space heating; in Los Alamos this figure might be a bit higher. Water heating is a distant second at 18%, followed by 9% for space cooling, then lighting, electronics, cooking, refrigeration, etc. In Los Alamos, residential energy use is increasing significantly, despite lack of population growth; per capita usage in a small five-city survey was highest in Los Alamos, about 30% more than in Bellevue, WA.

Efficiency improvements are the best way to reduce energy consumption, for instance, using LEDs and clotheslines, replacing windows and sealing skylights, replacing old furnaces and refrigerators with newer, more efficient models, turning down thermostats and wearing sweaters, and washing clothes with cold water. Christine Chavez of DPU, the County’s new energy and water coordinator, can do energy and water conservation audits for County residents (662-8147).

Tom believes that “revolutions” (e.g., the “sustainability revolution”) come from the grass roots, and only when the crowd is moving in the right direction will leaders emerge. That is, individual action is what’s needed.

Kathy Campbell

Observer Corps Reports

Los Alamos Canyon Reservoir

At the County Council meeting on Tuesday, September 27, Tim Glasco, Deputy Utilities Manager, gave a report on the status of the Los Alamos Canyon Reservoir/Dam. He didn't paint a pretty picture. Without the fire, the Los Alamos Canyon Dam Project would now be completed. The Las Conchas fire, however, caused huge devastation to the watershed above the reservoir, and a great deal of flooding and debris has assaulted the area and the road leading into the reservoir. The damage includes huge trenches up to six feet deep in the road.

The current plan is to reconstruct the road leading to the reservoir this fall before winter sets in. Dredging of the reservoir needs to be done, but whether it will be done this fall, this winter, or in the spring is uncertain. Much will depend on the amount of rain still to come, the snow pack, the speed of melting in the spring, and other factors. The County Council is urging that progress be made, so one day we can see this project completed and recreational amenities in place at the Los Alamos Canyon Reservoir. For now, we must be patient.

Lynn Jones

NM502/Trinity Drive

At the County Council meeting on September 6, Councilor Wismer moved that County staff, working with community members selected for the Technical Advisory Committee, come up with three specific design alternatives for NM 502. Alternatives would include first, the 2007 plan developed by the NMDOT for the stretch of road between Tewa and Knecht, a plan that had been rejected by the community. The second alternative was for two-lane roundabouts linked by either two or four-lane roadway sections. A third alternative was a four-lane signalized roadway that conformed to the County's Street Design Policy requiring the road design to accommodate multi-modal transportation, support adjacent land uses, support the County's long-term vision of sustainability and economic development, and be based upon best practices. A fourth alternative could be developed as deemed appropriate. The deadline for the project design development and review by County Council was set for 13 December. Implied in the discussion was that the plans for the east end of NM502/Trinity, from Tewa to Knecht Street, would be done to the design level required for submission to NMDOT.

Janie O'Rourke



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
Other (please suggest)
Medically Indigent Fund
Public Transportation
Sustainability
Water Issues
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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