Message from the President

Dear League Members:

The League is planning an exciting year ahead, including speakers, issue forums, candidate forums and leader updates. The calendar is in this edition of The Voter. Thanks to the members who participated the planning meeting.

As you will read elsewhere in this issue, the city’s – and the state’s – first Independent Redistricting Commission has completed its work. The League is largely responsible for its creation, and League members are responsible for its success. Karen Heldmeyer, who chaired the Commission, by all accounts ran a series of stellar public meetings, seeking views from all over the city. And four other League members served as alternates on the Commission. We can all be proud of our members! As Jody Larson said to the state convention, “This is the way democracy is supposed to work!”

A recent viewing of the film Selma gave me a moment of reflection on why voting rights matter and why voting is a keystone of our nation if it is to remain a democracy. On a personal note, when I worked for the Poverty Program in the mid-1960s, I had the opportunity to visit Selma many times and to get to know some of the influential people there. Sadly, according to recent reports, Selma is the classic hollowed-out community – jobs and opportunity are gone. Somehow we must find ways to engage voters in the political and policy process, to help them understand their form of government, and learn how to influence it for the public good. Failure to do
this will send the U.S. further into decline--a nation where people no longer have a say in what their government does.

The recent decision by the Supreme Court to hear a case in which the One Person One Vote principle could be eviscerated would mean the end of the rights of all kinds of people. This is the equivalent of the “poll tax” in which only (white) property owners could vote. Are we going to allow this to happen?

We must work to register voters! Let’s work to strengthen student knowledge and citizen engagement in Santa Fe County and in New Mexico. We can use voter registration events as educational events, and distribute information at other events. Would any of you like to accept the challenge to prepare a simple summery of how government is structured, how it works, and whom it represents?


Highlights
Board Meeting
May 13, 2015

- Five Santa League members will attend the state convention in May in ABQ.

- The Charter Schools Study proposal will be presented at the State convention.

- LWVSFC had a successful annual meeting. Santa Fe New Mexican Editor Ray Rivera gave an interesting talk and has proven to be an important league ally.

- Instead of a Board Orientation, a Board Retreat will be held in September.

- There was a discussion of the need for more publicity for our League. Marcy offered to help mentor building relationships with reporters.

- A local supporter of non-profits, Sallie Bingham, has offered her “event house” for a League fundraiser. Judy and others will pursue the matter and find that “special” guest.

- Acknowledged Nikki Harnish for her hard work organizing the “tabling” events.

- Janet Lincoln, Membership, reported a steady trickle of new members.

- All members were invited to attend a calendar planning meeting on June 9 and bring ideas for programs for the next year.

- Judy Williams

- Miriam Ries
2015 State Convention Highlights

The biennial state convention took place on May 16 and 17 in Albuquerque. The kickoff was a reception at the home of a Central NM League member Carol Tucker Trelease. It was a good opportunity for representatives of the four leagues to talk informally.

On Saturday, the convention began with an introduction by an Albuquerque City Council member, followed by a keynote speech by New Mexico Supreme Court Chief Justice Barbara Vigil. She is a former League member and said being a member was a formative experience for her.

The speaker on Saturday evening was Martha Burk, Money Editor for Ms. Magazine, syndicated newspaper columnist, and public radio show producer. Her latest book is Your Voice, Your Vote: The Savvy Woman’s Guide to Power, Politics, and the Change We Need. In 2010, as a senior advisor to Governor Bill Richardson, she crafted the first state gender pay equity initiative.

Saturday’s plenary session included reviews of proposed bylaws changes (see www.lwvn.org for the revised bylaws). Changes included clarifying when a program can be changed, when a position becomes final, and how the concurrence process is to work. The changes were approved by the delegates at the Sunday session.

Also discussed on Saturday were the new and revised positions. New positions include Alcohol and Living Wage. Positions on Education, Children and Families and Natural resources were extensively revised. The positions were approved on Sunday and can be found at www.lwvn.org. In addition, a new study of charter school accountability was approved at the Convention.

A two-year budget was adopted, and new board members were elected.

What the Convention Speakers Said

NM Supreme Court Chief Justice Barbara Vigil

Justice Vigil focused her talk on the premise that the Judiciary is a separate and equal branch of state government, and is not just another state agency. However, it is not treated as such in New Mexico when it comes to its budget. In New Mexico, the judiciary branch must submit its budget to the governor and then to the legislature. The governor has veto power over every part of the budget. Justice Vigil believes this arrangement corrupts the process and makes the courts beholden to politicians. She reviewed practices in other states, which she said can serve as models for New Mexico. Options include submitting the court budget as a separate bill; limiting the number of line items subject to veto; having a single line item; and having no line item veto.

At issue this year is the governor’s veto of an appropriation to make the court whole. The shortfall was caused by a veto in the prior year. This will negatively affect the magistrate courts in particular. One result is that the impartial judiciary is subject to political winds blowing in the state.

Justice Vigil believes civics should be brought back to the schools because the public does not understand its government. The public knows little about the court system unless they personally have encounters with the court. This is not always a positive experience since they don’t know what to expect.

Martha Burk

Burk said it took a long time for women to get the vote, to get “men only” out of the constitution, and that it is time we use our power. She reminded us that women represent more than half the population. Women are the majority of those who register to vote and actually vote. Therefore, women can control any election. Women should vote their own interests, including obtaining child care, equal pay and fighting domestic violence.

-Judy Williams
New Studies at Local and State Levels

The LWVSFC annual meeting and the LWVNM convention both yielded studies. Now there is one state and one national study.

Santa Fe League Economic Development Study

This will be a study of how local governments in Santa Fe County can affect local economic development. The team will look at the City of Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, Santa Fe Community College and the Santa Fe Public Schools. Jody Larson is the study leader.

The objectives are to:
1. Identify best and worst practices in local government economic development schemes.
2. Develop a draft position in statement or question format for members to consider, with background information, pros and cons, and links to further reading for those who are interested in reading more.
3. Hold information and consensus meetings with members, finalize the position and present it to the LWVSFC Board of Directors for approval.

New Mexico League Charter Schools Study

The League and the public need to better understand the use of public funds that are allocated to charter school operations. The study will examine these financial issues and how well charter schools align with the New Mexico Constitutional mandate for a uniform, high quality free public school system. LWVUS has a position on guidelines for privatization, but it provides no guidance on the privatization of education. The number of charter schools has increased, leaving inadequate funding for traditional schools; however, there has been little public discussion of this development.

Please contact Meredith Machen, Charter School Study Chair, for more information at president@lwvnm.org.

-Judy Williams

Who Counts?

Decades after the Supreme Court set “one person, one vote” as the standard states must meet in creating legislative districts that equitably distribute political power, the justices agreed in May 2015 to decide exactly which persons should count. Hearings will be held in late 2015, and a decision announced in 2016. Will total population continue to be the standard or will only eligible voters count? This could result in an enormous shift in power from urban centers to rural areas. Stay tuned.
Action and Advocacy Committee
Minutes from May 7, 2015

Members present: Joyce Blalock, Mary Ellen Gonzales, Karen Heldmeyer, Jody Larson, Julia Nathanson, Suzanne Schmidt (Chair and Board Liaison), Neva Van Peski, Miriam Ries, Adair Waldenberg, Judy Williams

County Issues
Reporting: Judy Williams
An email from Penny Ellis-Green, County Land Use Director, was sent to Chris Furlanetto stating that draft zoning maps will likely be completed within the month and can be sent to the Board for final adoption. Consultants working on the Developments of Countywide Impact (DCI) have held two sets of meetings to brief stakeholders and industry.

After September, the hard rock mining moratorium ends. If no code ordinance is forthcoming by that date, the county would have to again consider the requested zoning change for the basalt mine. Matthew McQueen, who represents a member of the La Bajada Coalition, requested of Meredith Machen that the state League complain to the county about a lack of transparency in relation to an RFP published for the sale or lease of La Bajada Ranch. Adair Waldenberg pointed out that by definition an RFP process is transparent. Karen Heldmeyer suggested one option would be to simply remind the county of the League’s transparency position. Judy asked the committee for guidance, and the committee agreed with her that we should take no action on this.

SFPS Issues
Reporting: Jody Larson
Jody briefed the committee on the budgeting process. All local and state government entities submit a budget request for each fiscal year. Those are revised by both the legislative and executive branches of government as they prepare their budgets. State budgets then go to the Legislative Finance Committee. The committee usually adopts the lowest budget. For the schools there is “above the line” and “below the line” funding. PED or HED controls the below the line funds, while schools control above the line monies. Mary Ellen Gonzales clarified that above the line funding is what is necessary to just open the doors, while below the line is more discretionary spending. Jody pointed out that the below the line money allocation operates in a manner similar to a grant process. When the legislative session ends, the Governor may further impact the budgets through line item veto power. Operating budgets are then prepared by each agency and sent back to the legislature, where they are subjected to modification through the Budget Adjustment Request (BAR) process. At the same time, agencies are closing out old budgets and preparing new ones for the coming fiscal year. Thus, three budget cycles are in motion and in different stages at all times.

Jody provided a hard copy of an SFPS presentation which outlines how sources and uses of money in the district relate to goals established by the Board. This process, instituted by Superintendent Joel Boyd, is an attempt to provide clarity about the use of tax dollars.
City Issues
Reporting: Karen Heldmeyer
The last meeting of the Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission with the public will be held today, and the Commission’s last meeting will be on May 14 at City Hall.

The Ethics and Campaign Review Board is leaning toward acceptance of the campaign finance model submitted by Common Cause. Rationale for accepting this hybrid approach is that the city would not be **required** to put any additional money into the system. If the city does not provide adequate funding, candidates could choose to opt out of public financing. The annual amount for funding would be specified by ordinance. No ceiling for funding would be set. The ECRB will meet at the end of May and send its recommendation to the City Council.

Per an email sent by Karen to committee members concerning use of water company funds, the committee considered how the LWVSFC might respond. The water company surplus came from rate increases and the .25% GRT. It was used to pay salaries of workers in non-related categories. In addition, 12% of the water surplus was moved into the general fund, thus balancing the budget with ½ of GRT monies designated for use on water projects. **Action:** Jody and Karen will explore League positions locally, statewide, and nationally to see if we have a vehicle through which to respond.

Healthcare Issues
Reporting: Judy Williams
The Board of County Commissioners was approached by an advocate and asked to intervene in some way in the hospital’s nurse staffing issues. The BCC in turn referred the individual to the Health Policy and Planning Commission. The HPPC will meet on June 5 to hear from the individual.

The county has awarded a contract to Presbyterian Health Services to create a Mobile Crisis Intervention Team that can respond to behavioral health and related crises.

The county is also funding two projects designed to address the issue of low birthweight babies.

LWVSFC Economic Development Study
Reporting: Jody Larson
The proposal for the study was approved by the Board. Current volunteers added to the initial group include Joyce Blalock, Dan Jones, Marcy Litzenberg, and Donna Reynolds. A kickoff meeting will be set during which the scope of the study will be determined.

New Business
Julia Nathanson asked for information about charter schools issues, as Turquoise Trail is seeking to come under state control. Mary Ellen stated that state control allows for less local oversight.
Judy reported that LWVN is proposing a study of charter schools. The proposal will be considered at the state convention.

-Suzanne Schmidt
Fundraising Report

The League of Women Voters of Santa Fe County thanks the following members for their generous donations to the education fund and general operations of the League that have been received as of May 29, 2015:

Melinne Owen  Roger Sims  Liz Stefanics & Linda Siegle

To Honor Marcy Litzenberg
Lynn Gary

Thank You

-Donna Reynolds

Redistricting Commission and the League

The city of Santa Fe Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (ICRC) completed the redistricting of the City Council districts on May 14. This was the first independent redistricting to take place anywhere in New Mexico, and it was brought about through a charter amendment drafted by the League of Women Voters of Santa Fe County (LWVSFC) and approved by the voters last year.

This unusual mid-decade redistricting was caused by a recent annexation in Santa Fe, one that brought over 13,000 new residents to the city but left the four Council districts very unbalanced in terms of population. The redistricting will bring the districts into population balance and ensure equal representation for people in all areas of the city.

By ordinance, the Commission had seven members: one from each of the four districts, one from the newly-annexed area, a statistician, and a cartographer. Any registered voter could apply to be on the Commission and all participants were chosen by lot. Research & Polling of Albuquerque were the technical consultants to the Commission and attended every meeting.

Karen Heldmeyer, a former councilor and a League member, was chair of the Commission. Many other League members applied for a seat on the Commission, but by luck of the draw no other League members were chosen, although three League members were chosen as alternates. These alternates (Neva Van Peski, Jody Larson, and Suzanne Ronneau) all attended regularly and were allowed as much input as the regular members, although they could not participate in the final vote.

All commission meetings were open to the public and entertained a great deal of public comment; all draft maps and data were available to the public on the City's web site. Four of the meetings were listening sessions held in each of the four districts, and these were quite well attended.

The Commission will report on their redistricting plan to the City Council on May 27. However, the Council will not be allowed to modify the ICRC plan; the decision of the ICRC is the final word.

Jody Larson gave a brief summary of the Commission and its work at the League of Women Voters of New Mexico convention on May 16. In the audience were the Chief Justice of the New Mexico Supreme Court and an Albuquerque City Council member. Jody made the point that the League hopes that this will become a model for other local governments around the state. Of course, it goes without saying that it is a good role model for the state of New Mexico!

-Karen Heldmeyer
Action and Advocacy Committee, LWVSFC
June 4, 2015, Meeting Minutes

Attending: Joyce Blalock, Mary Ellen Gonzales, Pat Hawkins, Jody Larson, Julia Nathanson, Suzanne Schmidt, Neva Van Peski, Adair Waldenberg, Judy Williams

County Issues
Reporting: Judy Williams
Developments of Countywide Impact code must be completed by the end of the moratorium on hard rock mining in September. Judy said the DCI consultants have met/will meet with industry representatives as well as members of the public but the BCC must approve it before the end of September. Public hearings will be scheduled for August. The Board of County Commissioners will hold hearings and vote on final Code changes, community overlays, and the zoning map in September. Pat Hawkins reported that a lawsuit has been filed by Rockology on the La Bajada issue.

A Request for Proposal to sell or lease La Bajada Ranch has been received. One bidder has submitted an offer but no information has been released. The bid can be rejected by the BCC.

Adair Waldenberg informed the committee that the county is considering the grant of a monopoly to a waste disposal company, Waste Management, when county residents now use any private contractor they choose. Residents of impacted neighborhoods have raised concerns.

City Issues
Reporting: Suzanne Schmidt
Attention was called to the written report submitted by Karen Heldmeyer outlining the highly successful work of the Independent Citizens’ Redistricting Commission. It was also pointed out that Jody Larson was able to submit a brief and heartfelt verbal report of the Commission’s work and decision at the League of Women Voters of New Mexico state convention.

Articles in the Santa Fe New Mexican that explored the budget decisions made by the City Council were discussed. The Community Protection Initiative was included in the budget as requested by the Fire Department. Judy pointed out that the county is considering a similar program. The budget also included a transfer of funds from the water division to alleviate shortfalls in other departments. Suzanne pointed out that this morning’s New Mexican reported that members of the Council who had voted for the budget were now questioning the legality of using an ordinance crafted for a previous budget year and expanding its reach.

Jody reported that the Ethics and Campaign Review Board has a set of proposed updates to the public financing guidelines. These must go through the City Council before being put into place.

Public Banking
Reporting: Neva Van Peski
Neva met with Kathy Updike, who was hired by the city to explore the feasibility of a public
The consensus documents she used in her work conclude that the banking world is in transition. She examined whether 1) a public bank would actually save money for the city, 2) there are alternative investment opportunities for the city, 3) methods for funding small businesses that could be identified. Kathy has completed her work and will present her findings in June. At some point, she would like to address the League.

SFPS
Reporting: Mary Ellen Gonzales
The necessity of schools having a well-functioning School Advisory Committee composed of staff and parents was examined. Superintendent Joel Boyd asked Mary Ellen to serve on the SAC for Engage, a program for at-risk students who have dropped out of school but are attempting to reengage. The teachers’ union agreed to a higher rate of financial compensation for the teachers at Engage.

Mary Ellen informed the committee about a program called “Bridges” designed for students who have been suspended from school long-term. 50% of those students are Special Education students. The goal is to keep these students out of the juvenile justice system.

Mary Ellen also clarified that if the Youth Development Center is closed, as is being considered by the county and reported by the New Mexican, the young people currently in residence would be moved to Taos. Mary Ellen serves on the Corrections Advisory Committee, which is currently not operational for lack of a quorum. There are nine slots to be filled and only three members of the needed five for a quorum have been appointed.

Economic Development Study Group
Reporting: Jody Larson
The members are in the process of collecting data to be used in preparing the final position.

Old Business
Reporting: Suzanne Schmidt
The Charter Schools Study Proposal was approved by the LWVNM at the state convention. Judy encouraged volunteers to contact Meredith Machen to offer their help.

New Business
Reporting: Suzanne Schmidt
In Suzanne’s absence for the August 6 meeting, Neva agreed to chair the meeting.

-Suzanne Schmidt

**IF and WHEN** were planted, and **NOTHING** grew.

-Proverb
## Calendar 2015-2016

### 2015

#### July
- July 8, 11-1: LWVSFC Board meeting
- July 15, 11:30-1: Santa Fe Proposed Campaign Finance Law Changes (Hilton)
- July 18, 11 – 2:30: LWVNM Board meeting, Albuquerque*
- July 23, 10:30-11:30: Nonfiction Book Club, Collected Works Bookstore, 202 Galisteo Street
- July 23, 7 PM: Hummingbird Tour – Pecos
- July 31, 9 AM: Opera Backstage Tour - $10

#### August
- August 12, 11-1: LWVSFC Board meeting
- August 18, 9-10: Breakfast with a Leader – Judge Shannon Bulman – Probate program
- August Date TBD, 10-12: Museum of Spanish Colonial Art Tour

#### September
- September 9, 11-1: LWVSFC Board meeting
- September 16, 6-8 PM: Local Water Forum
- September 19, 11-2:30 LWVNM Board meeting, Santa Fe
- September 30, 6-8 PM: Next Steps for Distributive Generation Forum

#### October
- October 8, 6-8 PM: Regional Solid Waste & Recycling Forum
- October 14, 11-1: LWVSFC Board meeting
- October 20, 9-11: Unit Meeting – LWVSFC Economic Development Study Update
- October 22, 10:30-11:30: Nonfiction Book Club, Collected Works Bookstore, 202 Galisteo Street
- October 28, 11:30-1: City of Santa Fe Public Bank Luncheon (Hilton)

#### November
- November 10, 9-11: Breakfast with a Topic – Food Security (Food Depot)
- November 11, 11-1: LWVSFC Board meeting
- November 13, 12-2: Past Presidents meeting
- November 18, 9-11: Unit Meeting - LWVUS Study “Money in Politics” Consensus
- November 21, 11 - 3: LWVNM Board meeting, Socorro

### 2016

#### December
- December 8, 9-11: Unit Meeting - Program Planning
- December 9, 11-1: LWVSFC Board meeting
- December 12, LWVNM Lobbying Workshop, Albuquerque
- December 16, 11:30-1:30: Holiday Lunch – SFPS Superintendent Joel Boyd (Hilton)

#### January
- City Retail Voting Program Launch
- January 13, 11:30-1:30: Lunch - Legislative Preview (Hilton)
- January 17, 11-3: LWVNM Board meeting Albuquerque

#### February
- February 4, 5:30-7:30: Legislative Reception
- February 5, League Day at the Legislature
- February 9, 11, 6-8 PM: Municipal Election Candidate Forums
- February 17, 3-5: Meeting with Mayor Gonzales
- February 25 or 26: 10-12: County Mural History Tour

#### March – Municipal Election Day – March 1
- March 4, 9-11: Unit Meeting – LWVNM Charter Schools Study Update
- March 9, 11-1: LWVSFC Board meeting
- March 18, 6-8 PM: One Person/One Vote – Supreme Court Forum – Sunshine Week Event
- March 19, 11-3: LWVNM Board meeting, Santa Fe
- March 26, 9-11: Women’s History Month Breakfast

#### April
- April 1, 9-11: Unit Meeting – LWVSFC Economic Development Study Consensus meeting
- April 13, 11-1: LWVSFC Board meeting
- April 24, 10:30-11:30: Nonfiction Book Club, Collected Works, 202 Galisteo Street

#### May
- May 4, 11:30-1:30: Annual Meeting (Hilton)
- May 11, 11-1: LWVSFC Board meeting
- May 14, LWVNM Council – Los Alamos

Check [www.lwvsfc.org](http://www.lwvsfc.org) for locations and updates.

*LWVM and other organization functions in italics

### Regular meetings:
- Action-Advocacy 1st Thursday of each month at Rio Chama Restaurant
- LWVSFC Board 2nd Wednesday of each month
- Book Club, Collected Works Bookstore – 202 Galisteo Street

Unit Meetings are only for League members
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA FE COUNTY
NEW/RENEWAL MEMBERSHIP FORM

Date: _______________   Name: (please print) ___________________________________________

Address: (please include zip) __________________________________________________________

Phone: ___________________________  Email: ___________________________________________

_____ DO NOT include my contact information in the annual Membership Handbook directory listing.

Membership is paid annually between September 1–August 31 and includes state (LWVNM) and national (LWVUS) dues.

Make membership check payable to LWVSFC for:

_____ Individual and Associate membership: $54  (Associate members are non-U.S. citizens, who cannot vote on League matters.)

_____ Family membership: $80  (Individual plus one family member)

_____ Student membership: $30  (For students 25 years or younger and currently enrolled in accredited institution.)

_____ Unrestricted general fund contribution (not tax deductible): $ _______

_____ Education Fund (tax deductible): $ _______  (Make separate check payable to LWVSFC Education Fund.)

Want THE VOTER newsletter delivery via email? It’s faster and saves the League money.  _____ Email  _____ Snail mail

The Action & Advocacy Committee is open to any member and currently focused on the following issues. Circle those of interest to you, and a League member will contact you for further information and discussion.

Issues (check as many as apply or fill in blank):

☐ Healthcare  ☐ Local govt.  ☐ Ethics/Transparency  ☐ Natural Resources  ☐ Education  ☐ Other

_________________________

LWVSFC success is based on the assistance of member volunteers. We welcome and encourage your help.

Volunteer Interests (circle as many as apply or fill in blank):

Work on Issues:

☐ Monitor public meetings  ☐ Lobby government officials  ☐ Study groups  ☐ Other

_________________________

Voter Services:

☐ Candidate forums/meetings  ☐ Voter publications  ☐ Information tables  ☐ Voter registration  ☐ Other

_________________________

Organizational Support:

☐ Help at events  ☐ Fundraising  ☐ Membership  ☐ Publication content  ☐ Website  ☐ Staff League office

☐ Other ___________________

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN TO THE LWVSFC, 1472 ST. FRANCIS DR., SANTA FE NM 8750

May 7, 2014
Nonfiction Book Club – “The Meaning of Human Existence” by Edward O. Wilson, a National Book Award Finalist

The League will hold its next Nonfiction Book Club meeting on Thursday, July 23, 2015, at Collected Works Bookstore, beginning at 10:30 a.m. At the April Book Club meeting, members chose the July 2015 selection, “The Meaning of Human Existence” by Edward O. Wilson.

From a review in the New York Times, “Mr. Wilson’s slim new book is a valedictory work. The author, now 85 and retired from Harvard for nearly two decades, chews over issues that have long concentrated his mind: the environment; the biological basis of our behavior; the necessity of science and humanities finding common cause; the way religion poisons almost everything; and the things we can learn from ants, about which Mr. Wilson is the world’s leading expert.”

It’s a short summer read with a lot of punch, so get reading and we’ll see you in July 2015!

-Donna Reynolds

LWVNM—State Convention—May 2015

Judy Larson and Meredith Machen discuss a successful Santa Fe, NM, citizen redistricting project

Photo: Chris Burroughs