



UPDATE

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

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Newsletter Editor: *not filled*

Calendar

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| May 8 | Thank-you Note and Packet Party, 140 Aspen Drive, Los Alamos, 7 p.m. |
| May 18-19 | State Convention League of Women Voters New Mexico in Los Alamos
at the Holiday Inn Express |
| May 21 | Lunch with a Leader, Los Alamos Zero Waste Initiative, Mesa Public Library, 11:45 a.m. |
| May 28 | Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, noon |

Lunch with a Leader: Zero Waste

For our May 21 Lunch with a Leader at Mesa Library at 11:45 a.m., we will hear from five residents who are truly leaders in the field of zero waste, who were supposed to speak at the February meeting that we had to cancel because of snow! Sue Barns will talk about the Zero Waste Los Alamos team and food waste; Angelica Gurule will discuss recycling in general in the County and our efforts towards producing zero waste (including concerts and other events); Tiffany Pegoda and Elchin Zafarov will educate us about composting; and our own Jody Benson will talk about what the Zero Waste Restaurant Team has discovered about what some of the Los Alamos/White Rock restaurants are doing to go green. Each of them will talk for about ten minutes and that will allow us lots of time to ask questions about this crucial topic.

Please note that the Co+op is now sending salads in paper/cardboard containers that decompose instead of using plastic ones. We are getting on board with helping our planet! All the plastic utensils and cups used at Lunch with a Leader are washed and reused. Each of us tries to do what we can.

Here are brief biographies of the speakers:

Sue Barns grew up in Northern New Jersey but fell in love with Los Alamos during family visits. She came to work at Los Alamos National Lab (LANL) as an Oppenheimer Postdoctoral Fellow in microbiology in 1996 and remained until 2008, when she left to train service dogs for Assistance Dogs of the West in Santa Fe. She now volunteers locally for environmental groups, Pajarito Environmental Education Center (PEEC), and the Los Alamos County



Sue Barns. Courtesy photo.

Environmental Sustainability Board, and is chair of the Los Alamos Zero Waste Team and the Save-As-You-Throw Research Subcommittee.



*Angelica Gurule.
Courtesy photo.*

Angelica Gurule serves as the Environmental Services Manager for Los Alamos County. She holds a Master of Science in Sustainable Environmental Resources Management from the University of Malta and a Master of Science in Information, Science, and

Technology from James Madison University. In addition, she is a nationally certified Sustainable Resource Manager, accredited through Penn State University. She worked at LANL on pollution prevention, sustainability, and waste reduction and later at the Department of Game and Fish, contributing to wildlife conservation.



*Tiffany Pegoda and
her daughter. Photo
by Kirsten Laskey/
ladailypost.com.*

Tiffany Pegoda is the owner of Zia Waste, a new worm composting business in Los Alamos. In 2014, she received her certification in Sustainable Resource Management from the New Mexico Recycling Coalition and Penn State Altoona. Tiffany is a proud member of the New Mexico Clean and Beautiful Advisory Committee and the

International Worm Farming Alliance.

Elchin Zafarov, permafrost expert, climate scientist, environmentalist, and co-founder of Biotechsavvy the smart composting LLC, promotes the idea and implementation of anaerobic digestion, so-called liquid composting. One anaerobic digestion unit converts organic kitchen waste to cooking gas and fertilizer, transforming peoples' lives towards sustainable living.

Jody Benson's family moved to Los Alamos when she was 10 and her father was recruited as one of the first private practice physicians to come to the town after the gates opened in 1958. Like most people of her generation with a liberal arts degree, she worked



*Jody Benson.
Courtesy photo.*

many jobs in the U.S. and the world before returning to Los Alamos with no retirement plan at age 40. Although she has worked on environmental issues for decades, she did not learn until recently that we waste 40% of food in the US before it even gets to the store, only a piece of the huge and critical impact food-waste has not only on climate change but land-and-water use as well.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

Co-President's Message: Does the League Make a Difference?

It's well known that participation in the League helps us to learn about topics ranging from K-3+ to recycling #2 plastics. But aside from learning and having fun, does all this activity translate into concrete results? Happily, the answer is a resounding "sometimes." Here are a few examples from the past year.

- **The Census:** We heard Robert Rhatigan twice (at Lunch with a Leader and again at the Legislative Preview). He talked about the importance of a complete count because of the impact on our budget from federal funds: an undercount of just 1% (that's 20,000 people) means a loss of \$60 million per year for the next 10 years. Governor Lujan Grisham has now responded by signing an executive order to create a Census Complete Count Commission for New Mexico.
- **Early Childhood Education:** We partnered with AAUW and Searchlight NM in a forum on the importance of fully supporting early childhood education in NM. And now the legislature and governor have established a Department of Early Childhood Education and Care to do just that. To top off our passion for education, Lt. Gov. Howie Morales spoke to our members before the Annual Meeting about the positive changes underway at the state executive level, where the approach will

shift from policing the schools to supporting good programs.

- **Health Care for All:** We heard one approach, the Health Security Act, outlined by Mary Feldblum and Taylor Tyler. The first step, a fiscal analysis, has now been funded by the legislature. And to stretch our minds, we heard a fascinating talk by Richard Skolnik comparing health care in the US with other developed countries—and shame on us!
- **Public Health Office in Los Alamos:** For several years, we have lobbied for this office to be reinstated in Los Alamos by the state of New Mexico after it was shut down. Funding has now been appropriated by both the state and the county to restore the services provided by the office to high school students, low-income families, and others.

So, congratulations to us—the Leagues of Los Alamos, New Mexico, and the USA! Working with many others, we do make a difference.

Rebecca Shankland

Welcome to New Faces on the Board

Over the past year, our League has blossomed into a diverse, multifaceted group of members. We reached an all-time high of 91 members, but each year a few folks move away or don't renew, so we try not to exaggerate our numbers.

First, we welcome our new board members: Rebecca Chaiken is our new secretary (she also writes up some activities for the newspaper); and Wendy Swanson, who already had volunteered for arrangements and now adds observing Planning and Zoning to her portfolio.

Board members shifting to new positions are Ellen Mills, now 1st vice-president, and Rosmarie Frederickson, now in charge of fund-raising. Becky Oertel has been our County Council observer for part of the year.

Rebecca Shankland



LWVLA Board of Directors 2019-2020: (top row, left to right) Leslie Wallstrom, Julie Williams-Hill, Akkana Peck, Lynn Jones, Amy Birnbaum, Karyl Ann Armbruster, Ellen Mills, Jody Benson; (bottom row, left to right) Kathleen Taylor, Barbara Calef, Rebecca Shankland, and Rebecca Chaiken. Courtesy photo.

Welcome to a Crowd of Brand New and Sort-of-New Members!

We happily welcome many new members, most of whom joined for the first time since our last Annual Meeting. Several have already sent in notes introducing themselves and now I'm adding a few more introductions. I'm hoping all the others will follow in the next few months.

Rebecca Chaiken writes:

I grew up in Phoenix but lived in Washington D.C. and Minneapolis where I was employed as a U.S. Probation Officer. Since arriving in Los Alamos in July 2017, I have volunteered as a docent at PEEC, at the Friends of the Library Bookstore, and as the volunteer coordinator for our local Democratic Party. I enjoy walking, light hiking, and reading (mostly mysteries). I live with my husband and our dog on Barranca Mesa. We love our new community!

Caroline (Cas) Mason writes:

I came to Los Alamos, after several hiccups, in 1972, having completed a Ph.D. in Chemistry at the University of London. I worked at LANL for 30 years, retiring in 2004. I've judged science fairs, been on the Oppenheimer Memorial Committee, gardened at home and the Santa Fe Opera, hosted Russians through the Sister Cities program with Sarov (the Russian nuclear city), been on the Citizens' Advisory Board for environmental programs at LANL, and participated in many Russian collaborations until Putin stopped these in 2010.

I gave a talk to the League about my experiences with the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) in Vienna. I wrote a chapter about Professor Emerita Darleane Hoffman for a book about women who might have won Nobel Prizes but hadn't.

I have written two books: one set in Britain in 1940, "The Blacksmith's Cottage," and the other about one of our dogs, "Mason, A New Mexico Hero."

Dotty Reilly writes:

I arrived in NM in October 1969, fresh out of grad school, and took a nursing job with the Española Schools. Subsequently I taught nursing at the College

of Santa Fe, mentored for UNM, worked for the NM Board of Nursing, and then for Los Alamos Public Schools. All this was interspersed with living in Italy, DC, and Austria for several years. After retiring, I pursued my love of cooking and taught classes at Cook'n In Style and catered Afternoon Tea.

Charlotte (Charlie) Sartor writes:

This is my third winter in Los Alamos, where my daughter, son-in-law, and two-year-old grandson live. I still go back to Alaska in the summers, but since I am here more than there, I have become a NM resident.

As a retired OB/GYN office nurse I have strong interests in women's health issues. My hiking, birding, and love of the outdoors leads to interest in environmental issues. In Los Alamos I volunteer with PEEC and do a lot of hiking, as well as square and contra dancing.

Shelly Wiemann writes:

I was born and raised in North Dakota and have lived in New Mexico for eight years. I relocated to Los Alamos in 2016 when I bought a home here and assumed responsibility of the local Edward Jones practice. I am a certified financial planner (CFP®). I am an avid international traveler, and I enjoy archeology, hiking, and swimming.

Elena E. Giorgi writes:

I am a computational biologist at the Los Alamos National Laboratory where I work on HIV and viral genetics. I grew up in Tuscany, in a house on a hill that I shared with two dogs, two cats, 5 chickens, and the occasional batches of stick insects, newts and toads my dad would bring home from his lab. I came to New Mexico in 2006 with my husband and two young kids after ten years of wandering between countries and continents. In my spare time I enjoy photography and writing. I am one of the founders of Voices of Los Alamos, a group that meets on the fourth Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Church to hear interesting talks about topics that interest us.

Cristina Olds writes:

I was raised by old school Republicans in the winter wonderland of Red Lodge, Montana. My mother is from Taos, and after I graduated from UC Santa Cruz with a Spanish Literature degree in the early 90s, I settled in New Mexico where I always had a cousin

Call to Convention, May 18 and 19

The LWVNM biennial convention will be held in Los Alamos at the Holiday Inn Express on the mornings of May 18 and 19. For complete information, see the Spring *La Palabra* at <https://www.lwvnm.org/newsletters/Spring2019.pdf>. Delegates from the four local Leagues and the state board will meet to discuss the program, budget, proposed bylaws changes, and to elect a new state board. All League members are welcome to participate in the discussions. If you wish to join us for lunch on Saturday or the banquet on Saturday night, you may register using the form in *La Palabra*.

nearby. I worked in graphic design for 20 years, eventually becoming an arts and culture writer. During my time in Albuquerque, I played ultimate frisbee and mountain biked competitively and recreationally. I spent most of 2008 in Costa Rica and its neighboring countries learning to surf, practicing Spanish, and riding my bike in the jungle. I moved to Los Alamos in 2014 to live with my soon-to-be wife, and currently I am a writer-editor in business operations at the Lab. I started Voices of Los Alamos, a non-partisan, activism group, joining forces with a few other women who had the same idea of becoming more involved politically after the 2016 election.

Jennifer (Jenni) Macke and Josip Loncaric write: We moved to Los Alamos in 2003. Josip works at LANL in supercomputing, and I work as a biologist at Pebble Labs. I also volunteer at PEEC, where I take care of the fish on weekends and provide random help with software. We joined LWV due to our interests in the environment and civic issues.

Rebecca Shankland, Membership Chair

Lonna Evans, Longtime League Member, Dies at Age 99 in Colorado

Lonna Evens was a stalwart League member for many years here in Los Alamos. We were sad to hear of her death, but amazed and not surprised that she lived to be 99 years old. She helped on our sustainability study

many years ago and always kept up with other issues we cared about.

One of my favorite memories is delivering the *Update* (printed on paper in those days) to her so that she could deliver the downtown ones by hand to save on postage. She was our energetic post-carrier zipping around to all these addresses.

Her hearty laugh and red hair seemed to go together: she wasn't afraid to speak out and express unconventional views.

Rebecca Shankland

Report from the Field on the Zero Waste Effort

The Environmental Sustainability Board's Zero Waste Team has been meeting with restaurants, schools, and other organizations, seeking to mitigate climate change through education and communication. Here is what we've learned.

Smith's: Kroger has a corporate goal of zero waste by 2025 in both food and single-use plastic shopping bags. The second-largest general retailer in the nation realized that their responsibility to the Earth also helps their bottom line.

For food that's good enough to eat, but not good enough to sell, Smith's seeks suggestions about what to do with the waste. Right now, the primary

recipient of that food from Smith's in Los Alamos is the Delancy St. Foundation, which comes to pick it up about once a week. Smith's also donates to LA Cares and would donate more if the organizations had more volunteers to pick up items regularly.

As for The Bag, corporate Kroger says the best partner is the customer as they "ease the transition" to reusables. Neither Smith's in our county has the guidance or resources to initiate the zero-waste program. It's up to us to help bring the vision to Los Alamos.

Restaurant Waste: The Team visited 13 of the approximately 28 Los Alamos/White Rock restaurants. We found—again—that the pursuit of profit already compels restaurants to order food and measure portions for least waste. Many would also like to compost, learn proper recycling, and find out how to limit other waste. They are eager for the County to collect food waste. They also want the County to re-offer energy audits to give them a clear indication of current energy use and a baseline for comparing progress.

A Los Alamos County Green Restaurant Certificate would reward businesses for the surprisingly expensive, complicated, and strenuous requirements to be an earth-friendly eatery. All businesses (and dare we add, households?) need education as to what's recyclable and what's not. As Tiffany Pegoda says, "Wishcycling is not recycling!" Just because you want something to be recyclable, doesn't mean it is. "When in doubt, throw it out" rather than contaminating the entire recycle stream.

Schools: Los Alamos Middle School Green Earth Club is working to green their cafeteria by eliminating all disposables, including food trays and water bottles. Chartwells, the cafeteria lunch contractor for all the schools, told them they would be delighted to green up all the cafeterias to make them like Chamisa, which is extraordinarily green. However, it takes an initial investment of close to \$100,000, and then additional funds for the salaries for increased staff.

All the schools want to be green. LAHS students say, "Change is coming, whether we like it or not." In everything we do, from reducing consumption to establishing smart building codes to implementing

global-energy policy, let's make this change one that values life over corporate profit, because the lives of these kids are worth the effort.

Jody Benson

Observer Corps Reports

County Council

This brief report is based on a detailed summary by Becky Oertel. Please see the Los Alamos County website for the agenda packets and video: <http://losalamos.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>. [You can also read Becky's more complete summary of the meeting on the [Voices of Los Alamos Facebook page](#).]

At their March 5 meeting the Council voted unanimously to approve the installation of smart meters at all customer residences. For customers who file a request to opt out of the program, the meters will have radio transmission of daily data turned off; monthly data will be sent just as it would be collected currently.

County Manager Harry Burgess reported that the primary consultant for the flow trail project no longer works for the contractor, so the contract may need to be re-assessed. Discussions about possible trails on LANL property are underway with Triad.

On March 19 the County Council and the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) met for a joint session with a representative from the Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems. See the summary in the BPU report. During the Council meeting that followed there was a discussion of gaps in social services in the County, particularly a need for more funding for the Teen Center and a "Tween Center" and for extending the hours of the Public Health Office.

At the April 2 meeting the Council approved re-zoning the 4.5-acre Black Hole property on Arkansas as mixed use to enable the construction of housing and home businesses. The Council voted 6-1 (Maggiore opposed) to approve the hike in all water rates. However, there were concerns about the new

billing system, including that the system does not encourage conservation. The Council also approved the creation of a Pay-As-You-Throw Subcommittee of the Environmental Sustainability Board. The Subcommittee's goal will be to reduce the waste hauled to the landfill.

Becky Oertel and Barbara Calef

Board of Public Utilities

On March 19, 2019, representatives from Los Alamos Department of Public Utilities, Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems (UAMPS), and NuScale provided an update on the Carbon Free Power Project (CFPP) to the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) and the County Council in a joint meeting. The CFPP is a project to build a 600-megawatt nuclear electric generating facility in Idaho that uses small modular reactor technology developed by NuScale. Through its membership with UAMPS, The DPU (Department of Public Utilities) has been exploring participating in the CFPP for 8 megawatts of base load power to add to its generation portfolio. Participation also helps the DPU to meet a long-term goal to become a carbon neutral power provider by 2040.

One year ago, the County Council and the BPU voted to stay in the project for one more year or until \$6 million had been spent by UAMPS to increase subscription in the project, and to secure more funding or commitment from the Department of Energy. Of the \$6 million, the County's exposure is potentially \$80,000 for this phase. Previous monies expended on the project by Los Alamos County were \$30,000 for the initial study phase.

As of March 19, 2019, UAMPS has only spent \$3 million of the \$6 million cap. DPU representative Steve Cummins indicated that he would return in the August/September 2019 timeframe, after the \$6 million cap has been reached. He will ask the BPU and Council members at that time if they would like to stay in the project for the next phase or if they would prefer to exit. The commercial operational date of the facility is currently planned for 2026.

UAMPS representative Mason Baker explained that during the past year 30 UAMPS members have subscribed 110 megawatts. Additionally, the Department of Energy has committed to 120 megawatts comprising two modules. The first module is to be used at the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) for research and development. The second module is to meet the electric load for INL. This brings the total subscription to 230 megawatts. Another 100 megawatts is being discussed among other municipal power providers in the Pacific Northwest. Baker explained that the cost for the project has dropped from \$65 to \$55 per megawatt hour thanks to DOE funding. He also emphasized that Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) is looking to add a NuScale small modular reactor project at Clinch River to provide power to Oak Ridge. TVA signed a staff augmentation contract with UAMPS which has been very helpful in sharing information about the project and the process. A video of the complete meeting is available on the county's website at http://losalamos.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=1674.

At the April 2nd County Council meeting, the Council adopted the BPU-approved water rate increase of 6.25 percent. This rate became effective upon adoption. At the last BPU meeting on April 17, DPU staff presented an update on the wastewater system. BPU and Council representatives are currently reviewing citizen applications to fill a seat on the Board that will be vacated this July. The Council will appoint one individual from the list of candidates.

Julie Williams-Hill

March Lunch with a Leader: Skolnik Evaluates US Health Care

Richard Skolnik is an expert on international development and global health policy. He has nearly 40 years of experience through his work at the World Bank and has been a lecturer at both George Washington and Yale Universities. His work has focused on health, nutrition, and population in low-

income countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where he has traveled extensively. He spoke to the League at the March Lunch with a Leader.

Skolnik explained that the goal of a health system is to maximize the health of the population, in fairly distributed ways, and at the least cost. Unfortunately, the United States spends nearly 50 percent more as a share of national income on health than any other country; we spend more in absolute amounts per person than almost any other country; we live shorter and less healthy lives than people in countries that spend less; and we have unacceptable health care-related disparities.

For example, in 2016 life expectancy in the United States (78.7) was only slightly higher than in Thailand (75.3), but lower than in Costa Rica (79), Canada (82.3), and many other countries. In terms of maternal mortality, a woman in the United States is seven times more likely to die in childbirth than in Norway (data from 2015). The United States also falls behind Norway, Cuba, and the United Kingdom in newborn and infant deaths.

In the United States, a person's income plays a role in life expectancy. Individuals with an annual income of just \$17,000 have an average life expectancy of 77 years; an income of \$87,000 increases life expectancy to 85 years; and those with an annual income of \$256,000 have the highest average life expectancy, 87 years.

Ethnicity is also a determining role in mortality. In the United States, Asian women and those with Hispanic heritage are less likely to die in childbirth than white, non-Hispanic women. American Indian and Black



Richard Skolnik. Photo courtesy of [Yale School of Public Health](#).

women are far more likely to die in childbirth than white women.

The United States spends more of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on health care than other countries because of the higher cost of health care here. Physician compensation, total pharmaceutical spending,

and administrative expenses are much higher in the United States than in countries such as Germany, Canada, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Further, many other countries invest more in systems which improve health such as early childhood education and universal health care. In the United States, health care spending is largely the result of higher prices for technology and health care services; it is not due to more frequent trips to the doctor.

In 2017, 28.5 million Americans (8.8 percent of the population) did not have health insurance. The majority has private health insurance coverage rather than government coverage.

Skolnik recommends that the United States focus on achieving universal health care at the least cost in sustainable and fair ways. Social determinants of health need to be addressed fairly and at the least cost, and gun violence and the opioid epidemic should be addressed via a public health approach. The gaps in infant and maternal mortality between the U.S. and other high-income countries should be considered inexcusable and unacceptable.

However, Skolnik is pessimistic that positive change at the national level is on the horizon because of politics, with privately funded elections and a profit-oriented health care system, as well as American individualism, arrogance, and ignorance. He does believe that change may come about at the state and local levels. Individually, we can vote for politicians who understand and care about the ethical and economic value of universal health care.

Rebecca Chaiken

April Lunch with a Leader: Lt. Governor Howie Morales

Lt. Governor Howie Morales arrived late to Lunch with a Leader, having left a meeting of the Board of Finance at the Roundhouse. He apologized and then plunged into his comments on the efforts of the new administration to improve education in New Mexico. On January 2, he said, Governor Lujan Grisham called him to her office to ask him to take charge of the

Public Education Department (PED) until she could appoint a permanent secretary. Morales was well-suited for that post, having taught special education students and having a Ph.D. in education. As a state senator, he had sponsored many pieces of legislation aimed at improving the schools.

The first thing the administration did was to eliminate the PARCC tests (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers tests), which had troubled many students and teachers and dominated classrooms since their introduction by the Martinez administration. The teacher-evaluation system, based on the results of the PARCC tests, was a factor in the serious shortage of teachers across the state. Morales said there were currently 740 teacher vacancies as well as 16 vacancies in the PED.

Rather than policing the teachers, Morales wants the PED to serve them, acting as a resource department. The legislature has budgeted \$500 million in new funds for K-12 to benefit special education, English as a second language, and other at-risk children. He stated that the investment is not just a reaction to the court case (Martinez/Yazzie v State of New Mexico), but the right thing to do.

Other changes include a 6% salary increase; a policy of respect for values and creativity; and the development of community schools offering wrap-around services such as health care and counselors. The K-3+ program has been expanded to K-5+ adding 25 days for the children in those grades in some schools.

In 2015 Morales introduced a bill to create an early childhood services department to consolidate all of the programs serving pre-K children in New Mexico. As an example of why there was a need for a new department, he noted that one year the state had to return \$22 million to the federal government because, due to poor organization, the funds had not been spent. This year the legislation finally passed and the Early Childhood Education and Care Department has been created. Morales also emphasized that collaboration, communication, and cooperation are key to progress in education.

Barbara Calef



Lt. Governor Howie Morales speaks at the League's April Lunch with a Leader. Courtesy photo.

Thank-you Note and Packet Party

We will hold the follow-up to the fund drive party at 7 p.m. on May 8, getting together to write thank-you letters to our donors. We will also be collating the packets for the convention and enjoying light refreshments. This is a great time to chat about what's going on in our community and to get to know each other. The event will take place at Leslie Wallstrom's house, 140 Aspen Drive, in Los Alamos.

Barbara Calef

The Green Wave: Political Momentum for Climate Action in New Mexico

Recently PEEC (Pajarito Environmental Education Center) brought two speakers, Cally Carswell and Noah Long, to Los Alamos to discuss climate and energy policy in New Mexico—specifically, to discuss the environmental bills passed during the recent legislative session and some bills that didn't pass.

Cally Carswell is a writer, editor, and reporter passionate about environmental issues in New Mexico. Recently, she started a podcast, *Hot and Dry*

(<https://www.hotdry.org/>), to help understand environmental bills working their way through the 2019 New Mexico Legislative Session and continuing to track results.

Noah Long (<https://www.nrdc.org/experts/noah-long>), the director of the NRDC's (Natural Resources Defense Council) climate and clean energy program for the interior west and northwest, worked in the trenches with legislators and lobbyists to craft the Energy Transition Act (Senate Bill 489).

What encouraged the 2019 Legislature to pass environmental bills? The answer is two-fold: our new governor and money.

Once elected, Governor Lujan Grisham made clear that environmental bills passed by the legislature were likely to be signed. Her Executive Order 2019-003 ([EO 2019-003](#)) called for two transportation initiatives: (1) updating our emissions standards, reinstating the standards that were rolled back under the last administration; and (2) committing to having 10% of state vehicle sales be vehicles that emit zero carbon dioxide. It also committed to energy efficiency by reevaluating the state's building code, which hasn't been updated in the last 10 years.

Money: New Mexico has been benefiting from the latest oil and gas boom in the southeastern part of the state. Income from that boom translated to starting the session with a \$1.1 billion budget surplus. This extra income from oil and gas allowed legislators to reinstate programs cut during the last recession and to spend money on programs like renewable energy and education.

Carswell emphasized New Mexico's financial vulnerability: depending on oil and gas money to fund basic programs, education included. It is a pressing problem for the future, caught between the need for income and the hazards of climate change.

Transportation bills, one that passed and one that did not. The bill that passed set up a process requiring electric utilities to bring their plans to regulate emissions to their regulators, the Public Regulatory Commission (PRC), every two years. By also addressing the source of the electricity (Energy Transition Act, which also passed), we clean up a wide

range of pollution sources from across the state.

The electric vehicle tax credit did not pass. Since the rate of electric vehicle sales is increasing steadily while battery costs are decreasing, Long thinks that electric vehicles will be at least as cheap as the equivalent internal combustion vehicles by the early to mid 2020's. The tax credit was intended to help New Mexicans afford to transition to electric-powered transportation. However, since the governor reinstated the Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) standard, Long is optimistic that more electric vehicle options will be coming to our state, since many electric vehicle models are only available in states with ZEV performance standards.

Energy efficiency for the rest of the state. The Energy Efficiency Act increased the energy efficiency regulations and the budget available to utilities for implementation. Importantly for large utilities (think PNM), the bill also separated utility financial health from sales. This fix incentivizes utilities to operate as revenue neutral, but it doesn't necessarily make them profit neutral. This solution "does affect their ability to operate in a world with energy efficiency," said Long. Interestingly, this bill does not affect us directly since Los Alamos is a municipal utility. Our energy efficiency standards are influenced mainly by our county councilors and Board of Public Utilities.

The Energy Transition Act, a big deal for the rest of the state. This bill ([SB 489](#)) did two main things: (1) set a new Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) for electricity generation while cutting out compliance loopholes; and (2) laid out a plan for closing the coal-fired San Juan Generating Station in 2022.

A RPS is a minimum standard that specifies how much electricity a utility has to provide its customers from renewable sources. It is also "essentially the key to driving solar and wind development in the United States" said Carswell.

Until this legislation became law, our RPS was to hit 20% electricity generated from renewable sources by 2020. And, as Long explained, "the average compliance among the investor-owned utilities is closer to 12% because of carve outs in the law that allowed them to hit lower levels than the stated number."

Long described the two main loopholes, the Reasonable Cost Threshold (RCT), which he jokingly referred to as the “Unreasonable Cost Threshold,” and the Renewable Cost Cap. The former sets “archaic limits for how much they can spend on renewable energy,” while the latter is an “overall cost cap for large customers,” explained Long.

Now that the Energy Transition Act has been passed and those carve outs have been removed, investor-owned utilities will need to achieve 20% renewable energy by 2020, in accordance with our previous standard. Plus, electric utilities will need to meet the new RPS, which requires 40% renewable energy sources by 2025, 50% by 2030, 80% by 2040, and then 100% by 2045. Carswell described our new standard as “one of the most ambitious standards in the nation.” This is in part because many other states call for clean instead of renewable energy sources. Clean energy sources covers renewable technologies as well as nuclear electricity generation.

The bill also specified how PNM’s outstanding loans for the San Juan Generating Station would be handled. The new plan will end up saving rate-payers about 35% of what would have been required to run the plant through 2053. Some money has also been reserved for economic development in and around Farmington, retraining of coal miners and coal plant employees, and welfare services for indigenous people.

Sandra West

For more information, feel free to contact Sandra West at [sawest.aka.sandra\(AT\)gmail\(DOT\)com](mailto:sawest.aka.sandra(AT)gmail(DOT)com).

Voices of Los Alamos: State Rep. Chandler

State Representative Christine Chandler reported on the slew of bills that were passed during her first session as our legislator. She is very pleased with the criminal justice reform bills. Pre-prosecution programs were expanded and funding was increased for behavioral programs in the jails. Solitary confinement was limited. There is still a need to increase staffing

to make the prisons safe. Measures to facilitate rehabilitation were also passed.

Chandler praised the Energy Transition Act, which includes renewable goals, funding mechanisms, and re-training for workers who will be displaced by the closure of the coal-fired San Juan Generating Station. The minimum wage was raised, two of three gun safety bills were passed, and education funding was greatly improved.

Chandler says the enabling legislation for the new Ethics Commission “needs to be massaged.” It’s burdensome to have jurisdiction over complaints in more than one place. She was disappointed that HB 51, which would have decriminalized abortion, did not pass. Her corporate tax bill, which would have restored the rates to the 2013 level, failed, and taxation in general needs to be more progressive. Overall, she greatly enjoyed the session, finding that the energy was “super-positive” and the staff is great.

Barbara Calef



Earth Day, 2019: Terry Izraelevitz, County Councilor David Izraelevitz, Sue Barns, and Heather Ward share their opinions about reducing food waste along the road to Zero Waste. Come to the League of Women Voters Lunch with a Leader on May 21 to hear more about Zero Waste ideas. Photo by Rebecca Shankland.

More New Faces Join the League!

Susannah Rousculp writes:

My husband, Chris, and I arrived in Los Alamos in 1997 when he was hired at the lab. I hail from Houston, Texas and attended graduate school in Los Angeles, pursuing a degree in Quantitative Psychology. I have been a stay-at-home mom to 3 daughters and a son: a college graduate, a student at University of Utah, a high school senior, heading for Univ. of Utah to study genetics, and a middle school son. I am a member of District Parent Council, Topper Advisory Committee, and the middle school PTO and help with the Topper Parent Organization. I spent most of my extra time coaching FIRST LEGO League robotics: the Atomic Flying Pickles, years ago and currently the Quadrumaniacs team. Especially when my husband and I lived in Los Angeles, we were grateful for the LOWV Voter's Guides, and believe that's a valuable gift that the League offers to American communities.

Wendy Marcus writes:

I have been an attorney for 27 years and have been in Los Alamos for 20. I do estate planning law, wills, trusts, probate, etc. I have 2 kids that I raised here. Oh and a husband too!

I volunteer a great deal, History Museum, Girl Scout leader for 7 years. I do lots of free legal work for non-profits; I was on the Los Alamos Employees Scholarship Fund for 6 years. I enjoy hiking, photography and cooking (when I am in the mood!).

I look forward to working with the League on important issues, raising awareness, lobbying and voting rights. I was certified as a voter registrar last year and spent several Saturdays outside Smith's registering people to vote, reminding them of the election and instructions for mail-in ballots. Democracy is a participatory sport! I look forward to working with you all.

LWVLA Board of Directors 2019-2020

Officers:

- Co-presidents: Barbara Calef and Rebecca Shankland
- 1st Vice-President: Ellen Mills
- 2nd Vice-President: Leslie Wallstrom
- Treasurer: Kathleen Taylor
- Secretary: Rebecca Chaiken

Directors:

- Reservations: Amy Birnbaum
- Lunch with a Leader: Karyl Ann Armbruster
- Voter Services: Lynn Jones
- Board of Public Utilities Observer: Julie Williams-Hill
- Publicity: Jody Benson
- Director at Large: Akkana Peck
- Fundraising: Rosmarie Frederickson

Off-board Directors:

- Arrangements: Wendy Swanson
- Membership: Rebecca Shankland
- Webmaster: Julie Williams-Hill
- County Council Observer: Becky Oertel
- Newsletter Editor: *not filled*
- Nominating Committee Chair: Ellen Mills
- 2nd Nominating Committee Member: *not filled*



Los Alamos County Clerks reach out to the crowd at Earth Day, 2019. Here they enjoy the company of a very young future voter. Photo by Rebecca Shankland.

If you would like to join the League, fill out and submit the membership form on page 13.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LOS ALAMOS

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Phone(s): _____ E-mail _____

☐ Check here to receive our local newsletter Update as an electronic file, saving us postage

☐ OR Check here if you prefer the newsletter mailed in hard copy.

☐ Check here if you wish to receive occasional friendly reminders of upcoming events by e-mail.

Membership Categories (All checks for memberships and contributions should be payable to LWV-Los Alamos and all are now tax-deductible.)

☐ 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

☐ Contribution: \$ _____

Interests and Ways to Help the League (check as many as apply)

Topics of Interest

☐ Affordable Housing

☐ Local Government

☐ Education

☐ Elections, Voting Rights

☐ Water Issues

☐ Land Use

☐ Health Care

☐ Money in Politics

☐ Sustainability

☐ Living Wage

☐ Public Transportation

☐ Environment

☐ Other topics (please suggest):

Ways to Help with League Activities

☐ Set up Refreshments at Forums

☐ Observer Corps (County Council, DPU, etc.)

☐ Nominating Committee

☐ Voter Guide Committee

☐ Voter Registration

☐ Publicity

☐ Website, Social Media

☐ Newsletter

☐ Membership

☐ Fund-raising

☐ Budget Committee for LWV

☐ Lunch with a Leader (assistance)

☐ Fund-raising Committee for LWV

☐ Participate in board meetings or join the board

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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