



UPDATE

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

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

www.lwvlosalamos.org

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Calendar

December 5	LWVNM Advocacy Workshop, Zoom, 10 a.m. to noon
December 7	Voices of Los Alamos, Food Waste, Zoom, 6:30 p.m.
December 9	Reproductive Rights in the 2021 Legislature, Zoom, 6:30-7:30 p.m.
December 15	Lunch with a Leader, Health Security Act, Zoom, noon
December 16	Amber Wallin, Taxes and Funding for Essential Services, Zoom, 6:30-7:30 p.m.
January 4	Digital Privacy Consensus Meeting, Zoom, 7-8:30 p.m.
January 7	Legislative Preview, Zoom, 6:30-8:00 p.m.
January 14	LWVNM Priorities for the 2021 Legislature, Dick Mason, Zoom, noon-1:30 p.m.
January 21	Lunch with a Leader, TBD, Zoom, noon
January 28	Board meeting, Zoom, noon
February 18	League Day at the Legislature, Zoom, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Lunch with a Leader: Dr. Rick Madden, Mary Feldblum Health Security Act Update

Our December 15 Lunch with a Leader, starting at noon on Zoom, will feature Dr. Rick Madden of Belen and Mary Feldman Ph.D., who will present updated information about the Health Security Act (HSA) as we move towards the 2021 Legislative Session. The HSA has been gaining momentum as the year has progressed.

Co-President's Message: The Best of Times? The Worst of Times?

*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,
it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of
foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the
epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it
was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of
hope, it was the winter of despair; we had
everything before us, we had nothing before us,*

Karyl Ann Armbruster

we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way....

I was reflecting on what a crazy mixture of contrasts we are living through now, and I thought of Dickens's opening to *A Tale of Two Cities*. Most of us only remember the first pair—"best of times" and "worst of times"—but the others are curious matches to our current perplexities.

"Wisdom" and "foolishness" are reminders of the straight-talking scientists versus the mask-denying crowds.

"Belief" and "incredulity" sound like the careful accumulation of election data by all the election officials opposed to the unsubstantiated theories of late-arriving bags of mail-in ballots and other fraudulent deceptions.

The "spring of hope" suggests the possibilities for controlling the virus and rebuilding our social structure, but the "winter of despair" suggests the current gloom of fearing contact with our fellow citizens and missing the satisfaction of interacting at meetings, concerts, restaurants, and spending the holidays with our relatives.

What do we think lies before us, everything or nothing? I worry about children who have lost a year of school—can they truly learn via computer? How many don't even have computers? Will they emerge weaker after losing a year of reading books, thinking about science, discussing social dilemmas—or will they possibly be stronger after learning about the stresses and joys of family life, the dangers and rewards of self-motivation, and why learning face-to-face is enriching?

Think carefully of how we can act together to move from the worst of times to the best of

times. The scientists are doing their part; we can do ours.

Becky Shankland

Welcome, New Member!

We welcome Elizabeth Auden to the League. I decided to ask for a photo and she kindly obliged—I'm hoping we can do that more often since we're not able to see each other now except by the vagaries of the occasional Zoom. Here is Elizabeth's introduction:



Elizabeth Auden, courtesy photo.

Elizabeth Auden grew up in Nashville, TN. She is an electrical engineer, and she moved to Los Alamos from Albuquerque with her husband and daughter in 2018. Elizabeth enjoys hiking and Argentine tango in northern New Mexico.

Digital Privacy Study Summary and Consensus Meeting

The Digital Privacy Study Group submitted its consensus questions to the board, and they have been approved. All League members are invited to participate in the online consensus meeting at 7 p.m. on Monday, January 4. We will send out Zoom information in the week prior to the meeting.

The Digital Privacy Study Group of the Los Alamos League of Women Voters held a series of meetings to look at how digital services and

platforms used by Los Alamos County can potentially impact the digital privacy of county residents.

As communications and services move further into the digital realm, our individual privacy is increasingly vulnerable to third-party developers, many of whom collect, leverage, or sell user data in order to reduce costs and make their platforms more attractive. In some situations, such as a mailing list from an alumni group, the risk of contributing to one's digital footprint is a well-informed and conscious choice by the consumer. In the context of a relationship with the government, however, the element of choice is not always clear or even available. When mailing lists, social media, mobile applications, and other types of digital technology used by the local authorities do not include appropriate security measures and transparency, citizens using these platforms may unwittingly be exposing their private data.

The study group used general readings about technical aspects of digital privacy to inform inquiries into the vulnerabilities in specific software packages, apps, or platforms that a citizen might encounter when interacting with the County. Wherever possible, we conducted our own investigations by using publicly available developer tools, reading privacy agreements, checking the availability of permission settings, and researching company reputations. The group also spoke with John Roig, the Chief Information Officer of Los Alamos County, about the acquisition process and criteria used by the County when choosing software or contracting for digital services such as website development.

Findings:

- Los Alamos County does not consider citizen privacy when contracting with or purchasing digital platforms.
- Digital platforms such as the County website, mailing list software, social media and mobile apps used by the County are capable of tracking users and collecting user (citizen) data.
- While most of these platforms have links to privacy and user agreements, none are clearly identified as third-party, and the risks to individual privacy are not disclosed.
- Some of these services are not available by alternative means (e.g., *County Line* newsletter, Code Red emergency notification system, certain Facebook groups).

Consensus questions

1. Do you believe your relationship with the local government is different from your relationship with a business or other organization that you might choose to patronize or join? Are your expectations of privacy in the relationship different? Explain.
2. Is concern for your privacy a factor in determining whether you sign up for services or feedback platforms provided by the County? Why or why not?
 - a. Would you prefer that the County inform you if the service they are using will be tracking you, and in what ways? Is a link to a privacy agreement enough?
 - b. Would you prefer the County use a digital platform that does not track personal information even if it is more expensive?
 - c. Should citizen privacy be a factor when the County chooses software or digital services?
3. Do you have a privacy threshold beyond which you would no longer be willing to interact with the County?

- a. Should residents be expected to participate in social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) in order to receive County announcements?
- b. If the County conducted a survey that, in the background, collected and sold demographic information about you, how strongly would you have to feel about the survey topic in order to participate?
- c. How would you react if your attendance at a Council meeting generated advertising in your mailbox or robocalls to your home?

JoAnn Lysne and Akkana Peck

Report on the General Election

Conducting an election during a pandemic is tricky. The Office of the County Clerk was divided into three teams. Only one team worked

in the office at a time so that, if one member became infected, the whole staff would not be required to quarantine. In addition, they needed to understand and execute the stipulations of the Temporary Election Changes Bill (SB4), passed during the June Special Session. They did an outstanding job!

Of the 15,223 eligible voters in Los Alamos County, 12,401 cast ballots, representing a turnout of 81%, the highest in the state. Of those ballots, 6,088 were cast during early voting; 5,146 were cast by mail; 1,162 were cast on election day. In addition, there were five qualified provisional ballots. (A few provisional ballots were rejected because the voters had not registered in time.)

The Absentee Ballot Board, consisting of eleven poll workers, began processing the ballots on Friday, October 30, continued on Monday,



Post-election audit members pictured above sitting from left, Kristina Kershner, Tina Moore, Devon McCleskey, Norma Tech, Lesley Harelson, Alminda Brundyn, Kenneth Holmes, Lori Hinojosa, Barbara Calef, Diane M. Touns, Allison Collins, Mary Wilhoit, and standing, Janet Michel. Photo by Naomi Maestas

November 2, and completed the task at 10 p.m. on Election Day. (For details, see the October *Update*.) We thought we were finished then, but we were wrong.

As a result of SB4, Naomi Maestas, our county clerk, was required to appoint a special Post-Election Board. The five-person board met on Friday, November 6th, to conduct a review of 50 paper and/or mailed ballots that had been received by 7 p.m. on Election Day, but not tabulated. There were also a number of provisional ballots to review. Most of the ballots could be run through the tabulator, but a few of them and the five provisional ballots that qualified had to be hand-tallied. This was not very time-consuming; over 200 absentee ballots had to be hand-tallied by the Absentee Ballot Board. The findings of the Post-Election Board were submitted for review and acceptance at canvass.

During the canvass process, three members of the Canvass Board reviewed and verified the accuracy of the election results from the early and absentee locations, as well as the election day vote centers. But there was more!

Following every general election, various precincts throughout the state are selected by lottery to perform a Post-Election Audit of the tabulators used in the election. Because Los Alamos is so small, with only 21 precincts out of 1,925 in the state, the county had not been chosen for the audit in many years. However, on November 20 Maestas learned that she needed to appoint a Post-Election Audit Board to sort through the 12,401 ballots, find the 719 ballots from Precinct 11, and hand-tally the votes for President and Vice-President, U.S. Senator, and NM Court of Appeals Position 3. After working for six hours, the thirteen members of the board completed the task. The results exactly matched

the machine tapes, proving the accuracy of the machines.

Barbara Calef

Preparing for the 2021 Legislative Session: Mark Your Calendars!

LWVNM has scheduled several virtual meetings this month to prepare League members and others for the next legislative session, which will begin on January 19. Zoom links will be sent for all meetings one week prior the event.

LWVNM Advocacy Workshop

The annual advocacy workshop will be held via Zoom this year on Saturday, December 5, from 10 a.m. to noon. The public is invited to learn tips from legislators and a professional citizen lobbyist on how to interact with legislators, speak at hearings, and advocate for a cause. This workshop is about the legislative process, not specific issues. The speakers will be Senator Nancy Rodriguez (D-Santa Fe), Representative Rebecca Dow (R-Grant, Hidalgo, and Sierra Counties), and Jim Jackson, former Chief Executive Officer of Disability Rights New Mexico.

Materials available at www.lwvnm.org

Register in advance:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_9GDTNYG2T9a6tcYqBIO8HQ

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Reproductive Rights in the 2021 Legislature

December 9, 6:30-7:30 p.m., with Rep. Joanne Ferrary (D-Doña Ana)

Taxes and Funding for Essential Services

December 16, 6:30-7:30 p.m., with Amber Wallin, Deputy Director, NM Voices for Children

In January two meetings are planned

LWVLA Legislative Preview

January 7, 6:30-8 p.m.
Representative Christine Chandler, District 43
Senator Leo Jaramillo
Senator Roberto Gonzales

LWVNM's Legislative Priorities for 2021

January 14, noon to 1:30 p.m.
LWVNM Action Chair Dick Mason

Save Food, Save Money, Save the Planet

On December 7 at 6:30 p.m. Sue Barns of the Zero Waste Team will be speaking at Voices of Los Alamos about how to reduce food waste. Zoom information will be announced on the VOLA Facebook the day before the meeting.

LWVNM Board Meeting

The state board conducted the November 21 meeting by Zoom. During the meeting, Voter Services Director Diane Goldfarb reported that 36,000 people in New Mexico had consulted Vote 411 for the general election in 47,683 sessions. Impressed by this success, the board discussed a motion to continue participation in Vote 411 every year. The motion was withdrawn pending further input regarding cost, but the discussion will continue.

Also, the September vote to change the LWVNM position on Election Procedures was overturned because some board members were not adequately informed. However, following extensive discussion among the local League boards and further discussion by the LWVNM board, the proposed change was again adopted. This means that the League will be able to support a bill allowing a voter not affiliated with a major party to request a ballot during a primary election without needing to register with that party. The position now says, "The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports an all-inclusive system of voting that allows all registered voters to participate in the primary election, so that (a) Voters who are not enrolled in a major political party may vote on one ballot per primary without having to enroll in that particular political party; and (b) Voters enrolled in a major political party can vote only on the ballot of their party."

Observer Corps Reports

(All of the meetings are now being conducted virtually.)

County Council

November 10

This Council meeting was very lengthy, ending about 11:43 p.m. Of special import to the League of Women Voters, the Council voted 6-1 to approve Resolution 20-18, a "Resolution calling on Congress to enact a Campaign Finance Regulation Amendment," introduced by Councilor Pete Sheehy. The gist of the resolution is a request for a constitutional amendment confirming that:

1. The rights protected by the Constitution of the United States are rights belonging to human beings only;
2. Artificial entities, such as corporations established by the laws of any State, the United States, or any foreign state shall have no rights under this Constitution, and are subject to regulation by the People, through federal, state, or local law. The privileges, benefits, limitations, obligations and responsibilities of artificial entities shall be determined by the People, through federal, state, or local law, and any such privileges or benefits shall not be construed to be inherent or inalienable;
3. The federal, state, and local governments have the power, authority and duty to regulate or limit campaign contributions and expenditures, including a candidate's own contributions and expenditures, and may further set limits upon the timing of electioneering communications and the length of time of campaigns for election to public office, to prevent corruption, and to ensure that all citizens have fair representation and equal participation in the political process and that no person or entity gains undue or disproportionate influence on the election of any candidate for public office or any ballot measure;
4. The federal, state, and local governments shall require that all such campaign contributions and expenditures be publicly disclosed, and shall make the disclosed information timely available to citizens in an easily understandable manner; and
5. Such regulation enacted and performed in accordance with the intents and purposes of such an amendment shall not be construed as a violation of the Constitution.

Co-President Calef's letter on behalf of the Los Alamos League in support of the resolution was read during public comment. The letter said, "The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos urges the Los Alamos County Council to adopt Los Alamos Resolution 20-18, which is a call to Congress to enact a campaign finance regulation amendment.

"For decades the League has been advocating at the state and national levels for legislation to reduce the influence of money in politics.

"In 2009 the League of Women Voters of the United States filed an amicus brief in the case of *Citizens United v FEC* in which they argued that 'the Constitution protects the rights of individual citizens to participate effectively in the political process and allows the regulation of corporate influence [spending] in elections.'

"We are aware that a resolution from our county government is just one small step toward reaching our goal, but we just celebrated the centennial of the passage of the 19th Amendment, which took many such steps over more than seven decades to accomplish.

"We are hopeful that this important objective will not take so long to achieve!"

A great deal of the meeting was devoted to hearing an appeal of a decision of the Planning & Zoning Board granting two special use permits for a residence in La Senda to conduct an in-home day care facility and a special use permit for the in-home day care facility to employ more than one non-family member.

Adelaide Jacobson

November 17

At the November 17th County Council meeting, there was an interesting and fact-filled presentation by NNSA and the DOE Office of Environmental Management regarding the radiation assessments on the DP Road areas of current interest, namely section A-8-b (the Bluffs senior housing) and A-16-a (a piece of the surrounding land that has been turned over to Los Alamos County). The bottom line is that the parcel containing the Bluffs has shown no contamination, but twenty or more “pothole” areas are being dug in that parcel to verify no contamination; and a great deal more assessment is being done on A-16-a because of the finding of a small amount of debris to which alpha and beta radiation adhered.

This was followed by a presentation by Kelly Beierschmitt, the Deputy Laboratory Director for Operations – another interesting and informative talk. His COVID update showed that as of 11/10/2020 there were 132 cases at the lab. At that time, LANL had 5,044 people on site daily, and 6,596 teleworking. LANL has found that teleworking works, and so they are reassessing their infrastructure needs. They feel they no longer need the new bridge over the Rio Grande, and they do not need more offices at LANL. They are planning to build teleworking hubs in Los Alamos (Central Park Square), in Rio Arriba County, and in Santa Fe, where remote workers could attend meetings or have computer access while working mainly from home. Beierschmitt also addressed childcare and internet access issues; a new study with the North Central Regional Transit District (RTD) on bus service from Albuquerque to LANL; budget and GRT facts; and environmental compliance.

Lynn Jones

Board of Public Utilities

At the November 18 Board of Public Utilities meeting, Utilities Manager Philo Shelton reported that the Carbon Free Power Project (CFPP) moved on to the next phase after project participants (one of which is Los Alamos County) voted on November 9th to approve the Budget and Plan of Finance. The CFPP is a proposed nuclear generating facility to be sited in Idaho utilizing small modular reactor technology. Mr. Shelton explained that considering the number of participants in this phase went from 35 to 27 and the total subscription level is now at 100 megawatts, Los Alamos County has lowered its subscription from 11.2 to 6.37 megawatts, maintaining the target price of \$55 a megawatt hour on 2020 dollars. He believes the number of project participants and subscription levels will increase now that DOE has announced a \$1.35 billion multi-year award to reduce project costs. BPU members were also reminded that the County will have two more opportunities to adjust the subscription level or exit the project before construction in 2025.

Members of the BPU also discussed a presentation that Chair Carrie Walker will take to the Council in December on the accomplishments of the Department of Public Utilities (DPU). Another matter that was discussed were organizational performance improvement programs. Currently the DPU is on a Malcolm Baldrige program, with a goal to obtain an award by 2025. BPU members discussed whether this program was a right fit for DPU and what other programs were available. The matter was tabled.

Julie Williams-Hill

November Lunch with a Leader: RJAAC

Three members of the Racial Justice Action Advisory Council—Michael Adams, Andrea

Determan, and Erin Green—spoke at Lunch with a Leader in November about the group, which formed just months ago.

The Racial Justice Action Advisory Council (RJAAC, pronounced R-Jack for short) formed after the Black Lives Matter protests, which were organized by high school students, brought together many people in the community who wished to focus on racial justice. The members include both Caucasians and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color). Their mission statement is “The Racial Justice Action Advisory Council (JRAAC) disrupts systems of racism in Los Alamos and creates opportunities for equity.”

RJAAC members decided to make decisions based on consensus. They have no hierarchical organization. Instead, a number of sub-groups have formed representing the interests of various members. They work as autonomous units; however, if they want RJAAC to implement some proposed action, consensus in the larger group is required. Current subgroups focus on LANL, Los Alamos Public Schools, Los Alamos County, Facilitation and Organization, Communications, the BIPOC Caucus, and Environmental Justice.

The group may be new, but they have already made significant progress. On September 8 the County Council heard their petition requesting a partnership with the Council on forwarding several initiatives to promote racial equity in our community. The Council voted unanimously to acknowledge the petition and request staff to investigate the matter further and return to the Council with specific budget considerations.

For more information or to get involved with the group, email [racialjusticelosalamos\(AT\)gmail\(DOT\)com](mailto:racialjusticelosalamos(AT)gmail(DOT)com).

Barbara Calef



Erin Green, Andrea Determan. Screenshot from the presentation taken by Barbara Calef.



Michael Adams, courtesy photo.

LWVLA Board of Directors 2020-2021

Officers:

- Co-President: Barbara Calef

- Co-President: Rebecca Shankland
- 1st Vice President: *Unfilled*
- 2nd Vice President: Ellen Mills
- Secretary: Rebecca Chaiken
- Treasurer: Rosmarie Frederickson

Directors:

- Reservations: Amy Birnbaum
- Lunch with a Leader: Karyl Ann Armbruster
- Voter Services: Lynn Jones
- BPU Observer: Julie Williams-Hill
- Publicity: Jody Benson and Leslie Wallstrom
- Director at Large: Akkana Peck
- Fundraising: Ellen Mills

- Arrangements: Wendy Swanson
- Membership: Rebecca Shankland
- Webmaster: Julie Williams-Hill
- Special Projects: Addie Jacobson
- Newsletter Editor: JoAnn Lysne
- County Council Observers: LWVLA Board
- Nominations: Ellen Mills, Leslie Wallstrom, and JoAnn Lysne

If you would like to join the League, fill out and submit the membership form on page 11 or visit www.lwvlosalamos.org.



The LWVLA Board of Directors for 2020-2021.

Off-board Directors:

Update, December 2020

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 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. Let us know if you'd like a tax-deductible statement.

____ Single membership: \$45

____ Household membership (two+ people at the same address): \$70

____ Single Sustaining membership: \$75

____ Household Sustaining membership (two+ people at the same address): \$95

____ Student membership: \$0 (must be 16 or over)

____ Contribution to support League work: \$_____

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, BPU, etc.)
- ____ Nominating Committee
- ____ Voter Guides 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 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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