



# 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](http://www.lwvlosalamos.org)

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## Calendar

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, Dr. Lonna Atkeson, Zoom, noon  
January 22 Spent Nuclear Fuel Storage Safety Consensus Meeting, noon (info coming later)  
January 28 LWVLA Board meeting, Zoom, noon  
February 8 LWVLA Program Planning, Zoom, noon  
February 18 League Day at the Legislature, Zoom, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

## Lunch with a Leader: Dr. Lonna Atkeson

In January LWL will move from Tuesdays to THURSDAYS. This is so our members who also belong to Rotary and Kiwanis can now come to our lunches. AND...the Farmers' Market will not be at the library anymore, but will remain at the Justice Center. All the stars lined up.

So, the next LWL is on **Thursday**, January 21, at noon via Zoom. Our leader is Lonna Atkeson, who is a Professor and Regents Lecturer in Political Science at the University of New Mexico, where she also directs the Center for the Study of Voting, Elections, and Democracy and

the Institute for Social Research. She will be talking with us about the upcoming 60-day session and various topics that will be discussed during this session.

*Karyl Ann Armbruster*

## Co-President's Message: Issues of Equality from 1920-2020

The League of Women Voters began its work long ago by fighting against inequality in women's treatment at the ballot box. Even before that, many of the suffragists had earned their battle scars fighting against the inequality in the treatment of Blacks.

Since winning the battle for suffrage in 1920, the League has fought against other inequalities. We have made progress on issues of racial justice and equal pay for women, but now in 2020 we are noticing different injustices face-to-face. The contrast between the wealth of the top 1% and that of the minimum-wage worker is chilling. We have learned during the pandemic that those minimum- and low-wage workers are the glue that holds our society together: the grocery store workers, janitors, transportation drivers, nursing and home health aides, sanitation workers, restaurant workers.

We are also aware of the skill of our underpaid teachers creating online lessons, social workers helping people struggling to get by, food bank assistants feeding the hungry or homeless—we are more aware of the need to value essential skills and pay them equitably.

I have also reflected on another inequality: government assistance versus charity. Shouldn't our government do a better job of providing sufficient help for its citizens, instead of spending frustrating hours arguing over \$600 or \$2000 checks? Why do we need so many charities asking for help when the government could provide support more equitably, as they do in many other countries? People in need should not have to depend on holiday charity for food and shelter.

The pandemic has opened our eyes.

*Becky Shankland*

## **Digital Privacy Consensus Meeting**

The Digital Privacy consensus meeting will take place via Zoom from 7-8:30 p.m. on Monday, January 4. A summary of the study and findings

was published in the December *Update* and may be found at <https://my.lwv.org/new-mexico/los-alamos/newsletters>. League members are invited to join the meeting to participate in the discussion. If consensus is reached, we may adopt a new position that can be used to advocate for local government policies that will protect the resident's digital privacy while giving access to government information.

### ***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*

## **LWVLA/AAUW Legislative Preview**

Our traditional legislative preview will be online this year on January 7 from 6:30-8 p.m.

Our three legislators, Representative Christine Chandler, Senator Leo Jaramillo, and Senator Roberto Gonzales, will explain how the session will be conducted during the pandemic. They will also discuss their hopes and expectations for the session and answer questions from the audience. All League and AAUW members are invited. You must register in advance.

Register in advance for this meeting:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0tcuuhpz8vEtCLfP1dUWsx01n\\_Yap54gGr](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0tcuuhpz8vEtCLfP1dUWsx01n_Yap54gGr)

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

## **LWVNM's Legislative Priorities for 2021**

On January 14 from noon to 1:30 p.m. Action Chair Dick Mason and other League advocates will explain the legislation the state League will be supporting during the session and will answer questions. Look for a Constant Contact message with the link on January 8 or on the LWVNM website, [LWVNM.org](http://LWVNM.org).

## **Observer Corps Reports**

[All of the meetings are now being conducted virtually.]

## **County Council**

### **December 1**

The agenda included four discussions:

1. BPU Chair Carrie Walker's 2020 Dept. of Public Utilities briefing for the County,
2. Wendee Brunish's presentation on developing a state-of-the-art LA Animal Shelter,
3. Racial Justice Action Advisory Council's discussion on racism in Los Alamos, and
4. A petition to create a new County entity to help the County achieve Net Zero Greenhouse Gas emissions by 2050.

**BPU/DPU Report:** Among the many *many* issues addressed, the BPU/DPU outlined the County's progress on County efforts including ongoing undergrounding of utilities, installing more electric vehicle charging stations, conducting a citizen survey about DPU's environmental goals, the excellent update on the Energy and Water Conservation Plan co-led by our own late Kathy Taylor, beginning installation of the advanced metering infrastructure in White Rock, the Overlook Park non-potable water booster station, repairing the Los Alamos Reservoir and access, and the White Rock wastewater treatment plant. -

For strategic objectives and goals, their main objective is to implement and maintain secure and reliable business systems accomplished by using revenues to provide good service while keeping rates competitive; promoting safe, ethical, and customer-focused behavior; and becoming a carbon neutral utility provider by 2040.

Two ongoing issues of interest to the League are the small modular reactors and the electricity produced by El Vado Dam. Los Alamos continues to be engaged in the proposed 720 megawatt nuclear electric-generation facility, although progress and funding seem to be stalled. In 2022 El Vado dam will be replaced. This, along with the years-long drought already resulting in low reservoir levels, will mean a drop in carbon-free energy production. The DPU will replace the hydro component of our renewables by going to the open market.

As always, there is tension between sustainability goals and the means by which the County is addressing them. The issue is always what is so-called cost-effective versus environmental concerns. In December, the County conducted a 500-person survey to find out how aggressive the residents want the County's sustainability goals to be.

For Chair Walker's comprehensive PowerPoint presentation, please check:  
<https://losalamos.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4703640&GUID=9AE6FDD6-EBD1-4380-914E-428351AE87E8&Options=&Search=>

**Animal Shelter:** Wendee Brunish, representing the Animal Shelter Community Task Force, presented the group's study on best practices for becoming a socially conscious animal community recognizing, "Animals support community and we support the animals."

**Racial Justice Action Advisory Council:** RJAAC led the discussion about the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion in Los Alamos. They addressed what kind of racial bias nonwhites experienced in the community, and pointed out that because the government has played a major part in creating racial inequity, the

government needs to redress the wrongs. A first step would be to create a task force to create a strategic plan. There must be a budget for implicit bias training conducted by a trainer from outside Los Alamos who has personal experience of implicit bias. The County must review community equity and inclusion to identify problems; we must normalize conversations about race and racial justice. We must have tools to measure the problem and progress. We must use data to measure inequity and we must identify strengths and challenges to improve the experiences of all residents in the County.

The Council and RJAAC agreed that the decision of how to proceed with creating a task force/board/committee should be made by the new Council.-

For more information on RJAAC, their history, personal stories, and the goals of the organizers for justice and inclusion, please watch the November Lunch with a Leader at <https://my.lwv.org/new-mexico/los-alamos/article/watch-video-racial-justice-action-advisory-council-11-17-20-lunch-leader>.

**Net Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 2050:** A group of citizens submitted a petition to push the County to act more aggressively on energy and other sustainability issues by creating a new County entity to help the County achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. An interim goal would be to achieve at least a 45% reduction from 2005 levels by 2030 (in accordance with the State of New Mexico Climate Change Plan). The Board and Department of Public Utilities have been working on many of these goals, but some of the issues are outside their purview. There was considerable discussion about the proposal. See the December 15 report for Council action.

*Jody Benson*

## December 15

During the December 15 County Council meeting, several items on the consent agenda were approved. These items included two-year contracts for Family Strengths Network and Las Cumbres. Both agencies will provide family resources, support, and parent education programs. Family Strengths Network will focus on promotion and prevention while Las Cumbres will focus on intervention and treatment. During the contract period, the County will undertake a gap analysis to identify potential needs, overlaps, and coordination to effectively support youth and family programs.

The Council also approved an ordinance to begin the sale of County-owned property on Trinity Drive to Pet Pangaea for a future store location. The ordinance will be considered for approval during the January 5, 2021, Council meeting.

The Council approved a purchase agreement to enter into a 90-day due diligence period for the potential purchase of two pieces of property on Central Avenue, commonly known as the CB Fox building and the Reel Deal Theater, for a total cost of \$4 million. During the due diligence period the County will determine if the purchase of these properties could support the local business community; provide more housing options; and increase the vibrancy and amenities of the downtown area. Areas of consideration will include the building structures and need for remodeling or demolition; potential uses; and parking issues.

The Council adopted the 2021 State Legislative Agenda. They also added support for expanding broadband access for all New Mexicans, and the exclusion of municipal utility records from public access requests.

A citizen petition signed by more than 180 Los Alamos citizens (including many League members) was presented to the Council. This petition asked the Council to appoint a committee made up of community members and local government staff to develop a comprehensive resiliency, energy, and sustainability plan. This group will gather necessary information and present options and recommendations for how Los Alamos County can achieve net zero greenhouse gas equivalents in all aspects of county operations and community life. The County Council approved this petition and will appoint committee members at its January 26, 2021, meeting.

*Rebecca Chaiken*

### **Read this announcement if you would like to serve on the committee:**

Los Alamos County is seeking letters of interest to appoint up to nine community members to a committee to develop a plan to combat and minimize the effects of greenhouse gas (GHG). The charter for the committee is currently being developed; however, based upon Council discussions with an interested citizens' group at the Dec. 15 Council meeting, is expected to include provisions that address:

- Understanding options for addressing climate change and what might offer the best, cost-effective path forward within budget and staffing constraints in Los Alamos, including consolidation of various plans in place within the County for greater benefit and more effective implementation
- How best to utilize or seek legislative appropriations, loans and/or grants toward identified costs to implement the GHG plan
- Providing input for making recommendations, based on facilitated public meetings to seek input from the community,



about the GHG plan, prior to its being presented to the Council

- Participating in committee meetings to review materials provided by hired consultants and County staff related to: current plans, current conditions, best practices, plans from other similar sized communities successfully addressing GHG, and other procured services needed to make informed decisions in developing a draft plan for Council's consideration.

The deadline for letters of interest is **Monday, Jan. 18 at 5:00 p.m.** and is open to all County residents. Letters should be one or two pages and explain background and qualifications, name of company or business (if applicable) and why the resident believes they would be a good selection to serve on the new GHG Committee. The committee will sunset at the end of 2021 with results going to Council at the end of their term.

To learn more, download the petition here:  
<https://losalamosnm.us/cms/One.aspx?portalId=6435810&pageId=17308298&portletInstanceId=551372&portletAction=pageedit&action=edit>

Watch the video on demand of the Dec. 15 Council meeting and citizen presentation on GHG here: <https://losalamos.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

## Board of Public Utilities

The Board of Public Utilities (BPU) met virtually on December 16. Utilities Manager Philo Shelton reported that the County Council had accepted a citizen petition to create a task force to develop a comprehensive resiliency, energy and sustainability plan to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 in accordance with the UN Paris Agreement goal. The Council

will request a member from the BPU to participate in this process.

BPU members voted to recommend to the County Council that it should support a grant application being prepared by Keystone Restoration Ecology and Natural Channel Designs. The application requests funding through the State to restore the Los Alamos reservoir watershed area and stream. This BPU recommendation will be forwarded to the Council for approval in January. Another request for BPU support for a grant application was presented by Dr. Prisca Tiasse with Biodidact. She is sampling and analyzing the county's wastewater for COVID-19 viral content. A funding opportunity with the Environmental Protection Act, if successful, will allow her to continue this research with viral pathogens. BPU members voted to provide Dr. Tiasse a letter of support for this application.

BPU members and DPU staff also discussed the LA Green Program (Renewable Energy Certificate program). When the program was developed in 2005, the county did not have any resources that qualified as generating renewable energy certificates or RECs. Revenue collected from the program was used to purchase RECs on the market to meet customer demand. Since that time, DPU has begun generating RECs through its low-flow turbine at the hydroelectric facility in Abiquiu (installed in 2011) and the solar array on the closed landfill (installed in 2012). BPU and staff discussed how revenue generated from the program could be used to further the environmental goals of the department. The DPU will continue to explore options.

*Julie Williams-Hill*

## ***December LWL: Mary Feldblum and Dr. Rick Madden Discuss the Health Security Plan***

Mary Feldblum, Executive Director of Health Security for New Mexicans, was invited to return to Lunch with a Leader to explain the bill her group is championing for the 2021 legislative session. It will be called the Health Security Planning and Design Act and will be sponsored by Rep. Debbie Armstrong and Sen. Ortiz y Pino. The bill establishes a four-year, transparent process for making design decisions, creating a board to make the initial decisions before handing the job over to the Health Security Plan Commission. The bipartisan proposal is currently supported by more than 170 organizations and has been endorsed by 37 cities and counties.

A fiscal analysis conducted by the NM Legislature in 2020 concluded that the proposed plan would reduce (not eliminate) rising health care costs, saving up to \$2.7 billion in a five-year period. Feldblum estimates that 80% of New Mexicans will sign up for the Plan. It will not cover members of the military or federal retirees. Tribes as well as health plans covered under Erisa (the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974) will have the option to join.

The Plan will offer freedom of choice of health care provider and hospital, comprehensive services equivalent to those offered to state employees, bulk purchasing of drugs, and protection for retirees.

Premiums will be based on a sliding scale based on income and deposited in a dedicated fund. There will be co-pays, but no deductibles. Everyone will have the same coverage. One advantage of the plan is that it will be possible to reduce the cost of auto insurance and workmen's compensation since the medical portion of the claims will already be covered. Feldblum commented that "no state in the nation has gotten this far."

Dr. Rick Madden, a family physician for 36 years, focused on the deficits of the current complex array of insurance programs. The current system is so opaque that the doctor doesn't know what's covered until the patient gets to the pharmacy. He remarked that even *Medical Economics*, a business-oriented



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*Mary Feldblum speaking at the December LWL. Screenshot by Barbara Calef.*

magazine, has suggested that health care might be a right. Medicare transformed health care in the US, Dr. Madden said. We need another transformative action. The ACA was a compromise; it needs to be fixed.

Feldblum stated that the outlook for the legislation is good, but citizen support is critical. Her organization is offering Zoom workshops on “Health Security Basics” and “Talking about Health Security to Friends.” Go to [nmhealthsecurity.org](http://nmhealthsecurity.org) for more information.

*Barbara Calef*

## **Program Planning Meeting**

In preparation for our Annual Meeting in April and the LWVNM Convention, also in April, we will hold a program planning meeting on February 8, at noon on Zoom. League members are invited to join the event. Every League member has the opportunity to influence the selection of issues on which the League will focus its time, talent, and funds. To keep the League vital, it is important that a large number of members participate in this event.

At the meeting we will consider whether there are local issues that should be addressed based on our League’s current positions (on our website at <http://lwvlosalamos.org>). We also ask members to consider whether any of our current positions need to be updated or whether there are other studies to be undertaken.

In addition, we will discuss issues for the state League to consider. The state positions are online at <http://www.lwvnm.org/positions.html>. Last year the LWVNM board approved a study of judicial qualifications and the selection process, which is ongoing. All state positions are subject to approval by the delegates at the LWVNM Convention. League advocacy must be based on our positions. What are we missing?

*Barbara Calef*

## **What It Means to Be Nonpartisan**

Since LWVUS withdrew recognition from LWV of Nevada, questions have come up about being nonpartisan. As a starting point, the LWVUS policy states that the League of Women Voters does not support or oppose any political party or candidate. Our state position, which goes into more detail, can be found here: <https://www.lwvnm.org/documents.html> under Policies.

In practice, what does this actually mean? We all have our own political opinions. We all have freedom of speech. But in order to be effective when we speak for the League, we voice the League viewpoint, which begins with our mission of empowering voters and defending democracy.

We do not only empower voters who agree with our positions. We empower all voters. We offer voter information and registration, voter guides,



issue forums and all of our voter education efforts to everyone. We cannot do this effectively without credibility, integrity, and civility.

The League has its positions, based on a thorough study of issues and agreed on via consensus or concurrence. We advocate for policies based on these. Do we support or oppose bills? Yes, we do. Do we criticize government policies? Yes, we do.

But we do not criticize or support political parties or candidates.

The League envisions “a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and the confidence to participate.” When everyone participates, we can do a better job to ensure a government that works in the public interest, a government that works for everyone.

We can’t achieve that vision by publicly saying we’re fighting with one party or another. We can’t do that by pointing out a political party’s mistakes or a candidate’s less than stellar behavior. Doing our job effectively, our job of educating the public and advocating for our positions, requires a different approach. Karen Wentworth, currently co-president of the League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico, once said, “We are the people who color inside the lines.” Because of the integrity of our process, we’ve made it successfully through our first century and we’re beginning our second.

*Hannah Burling, LWVNM President*

## **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

### Off-board Directors:

- 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, visit [www.lwvlosalamos.org](http://www.lwvlosalamos.org) or fill out and submit the membership form on page 10.

# 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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