



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

June 16 Lunch with a Leader, Heather Ferguson, Zoom, 11:45 a.m.
June 18 Special Session of the NM Legislature to begin
June 23 Board Meeting, Zoom, noon

Lunch with a Leader: Heather Ferguson

The June 16 Lunch with a Leader will be another Zoom event. Our leader will be Heather Ferguson, the Legislative Director for Common Cause New Mexico. She manages campaigns concerned with money in politics and leads day-to-day operations including coalition building and lobbying. In her spare time, Ferguson volunteers with the Anti-Defamation League, plays piano, hikes with her dog, harps on her daughter to do her homework, and is an avid bookworm. She graduated with honors from the University California at Los Angeles with a B.A. in Biogeography focused on wildlife conservation.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

Co-President's Message: Politics or Protest?

To the wrongs that need resistance
To the right that needs assistance
To the future in the distance
Give yourselves.

— Carrie Chapman Catt, LWV founder, 1920

The question for League members is how best to “give ourselves.” Do we need studies or advocacy or action? Carrie Chapman Catt helped form the League in 1920 to help newly enfranchised women become educated voters. Under her leadership, the League developed the principle that before we vote or lobby, we must study. The studies demand a tremendous amount of time and energy, requiring us to gather information on all sides of an issue, create questions for discussion, and finally come to

consensus based on the judgment of the membership.

Is this effort worth all the time and trouble? Often the outcome could be predicted ahead of time, yet in spending the time to inform ourselves about the arguments pro and con, we strengthen our own awareness and public credibility. Our positions are not black and white, but nuanced statements. They are not a rallying cry but a declaration of reasons.

So where does the League approach to government leave us now? Barack Obama said that in the current outcry over the murder of George Floyd our choice is not between “politics and protest”—they are complementary. But if what we as a League do best is politics, then what about protest? In fact, there is a time to



Sunday's marchers gather at Ashley Pond to protest the horrifying death of George Floyd. Photo by Maire O'Neill.

express outrage. Quiet, peaceful demonstrations like that in Los Alamos last Sunday are in the tradition of protests in the cause of women's suffrage, like those led by Carrie Chapman Catt when she came to New Mexico in 1919. Our protests are based on the ideas developed in our positions—it's not either protests or politics, but both.



Photo courtesy of Maire O'Neill.

“The League of Women Voters of the United States believes in the individual liberties guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. The League is convinced that individual rights now protected by the Constitution should not be weakened or abridged.” That is our position. Based on that position, we proclaim: “Black Lives Matter.”

Rebecca Shankland

Welcome, New Members!

We are delighted to have a number of new members: Maire O'Neill, Helen Carpenter, Kurt Steinhaus, Sara Scott, Joyce Zaugg, Colleen Olinger, Cat Ozment, Carrie Walker, and Mari Jorgensen. Here are short introductions to several of these members.

Colleen Olinger writes: I come from a rural background (Utah/Nevada), but spent the '60s in urban Chicago, most importantly attending the University of Chicago and marrying (once only). I taught school in Indiana and Chicago, was a Public Aid caseworker, a proofreader at *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and participated in the civil rights movement. In 1969/70, I followed Bart to his job at the Los Alamos Laboratory. We are the parents of two sons, both NM natives. We welcomed our eldest during the three years we lived at Bandelier while I worked there. We have "adopted" two Indonesian girls. (I am "Granny Colleen.") I have a 100-year-old mother who requires attention.

In Los Alamos I was employed for some 12 years as an environmental staff member at the Lab before owning and managing Ojo de Dios-Otowi Station Bookstore for 15 years. I continue to own a small nature/history book press, Otowi Crossing. Since retiring from the store, my major community responsibility has been as volunteer overseer of the NPS Valles Caldera dendroglyph project.

Susannah Rousculp has been a member for two years, but I missed getting her into print earlier.

She 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 the 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 coach the Quadrumaniacs team. Especially when my husband and I lived in Los Angeles, we were grateful for the LWV Voter Guides, and believe that's a valuable gift that the League offers to American communities.

Kurt Steinhaus writes: I was born in Los Alamos, New Mexico and have dedicated my career to education. I currently serve as Superintendent of the Los Alamos Public Schools. My Bachelor's degree is in music education; I have two Masters Degrees, a Master of Arts in Music and a more recent Master of Science in Educational Technology from the University of Oregon. My Doctorate, from the University of New Mexico, is in Educational Leadership and Organizational Learning.

My prior appointment was at Los Alamos National Laboratory, where I served as director of student programs, education, workforce development, scholarships, and community giving. I have also served as Deputy Secretary of Education and Education Policy Advisory for the Governor of New Mexico. My wife and I have two children. Valerie is a software engineer at Los Alamos National Laboratory. My son Kent, married to Katy, is a hydrology engineer in Colorado and Katy is an electrical engineer.

Catherine (Cat) Ozment writes: After completing a PhD in contemporary literature, I moved to Los Alamos in 2015. The heartbreak of the 2016 election was a wake-up call about my lack of true involvement in the political

landscape, so I joined the County Art in Public Places Advisory Board in 2017 and later the County Community Development Advisory Board (I still serve on both). I got involved in electoral politics with Christine Chandler's campaign for HD43 in January 2018, then served as data manager for Christine and DPLAC during the 2018 General. I was elected Chair of the Los Alamos Democrats in April 2019 and have been working to build up a younger volunteer presence, diversify our GOTV projects, and develop our party's grassroots organizing capacity at the Ward level. When I'm not investing myself in local politics, I am a freelance editor, teach creative writing at the Fuller Lodge Art Center, have a variety of creative outlets from pottery to yarn art, and dote shamelessly on my two very elderly goldendoodles.

Sara Scott writes: I currently serve as the Chair of the Los Alamos County Council; I was elected to a four-year term in the November 2018 general election. I have lived in Los Alamos for 30 years--raising children, working at LANL, and volunteering. I value Los Alamos's recreational, cultural, and educational opportunities as well as communication, diversity, and transparency in government. I am retired from a 24-year career at LANL and work as a private consultant. At LANL I contributed to a broad range of initiatives in areas ranging from nuclear energy, nuclear nonproliferation, and national security to international engagement. I gained leadership experience as a scientist, Division Leader, and Program Director at LANL. I received my PhD in Inorganic Chemistry from Iowa State and was a National Science Foundation-NATO Postdoctoral Fellow at the Max-Planck-Institut für Kohlenforschung, Mülheim an der Ruhr, Germany, where I focused on developing new routes to intermetallic hydrogen storage materials.

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

County Council

May 5

This meeting was squarely focused on how the County was dealing with the COVID -19 pandemic. Harry Burgess gave a lengthy report about the County activities and meetings he has participated in to help keep the number of cases low for Los Alamos.

Burgess and several Council members have also attended many meetings with the governor to make plans for reopening businesses and entertainment venues. He outlined the plans for Phase I, announcing that the Golf Course would re-open on May 13th. It took only a minute for the Council to decide not to open the pool yet. They also discussed how to keep people from swimming in the reservoir. The consensus was that they could not stop this activity because they don't have jurisdiction since it is in the National Forest.

There was a discussion about leasing County-owned land to the Dog Obedience Club. Also, Beverley Simpson, the County's Emergency Management Coordinator, gave a presentation proposing various amendments to the Emergency Operations Plan. It was essentially a Pandemic Appendix. The Council voted unanimously to pass the requested amendments.

Rosmarie Frederickson

May 19

Once again the County Council meeting was focused on the numerous ways the COVID-19

pandemic is affecting the County, and ways the deleterious effects could be ameliorated. Every party involved in the meeting emphasized the importance of safety and taking serious precautions before reopening.

Harry Burgess gave a lengthy overview of County activities in dealing with the pandemic. Many activities have been cancelled, or have gone “virtual,” including the Ashley Pond summer concerts, the arts and crafts fairs, the Hawk to Hilltopper event, Science Fest, the July 4th celebration in White Rock, etc. Over time some of the events may be allowed, like the County rodeo in August, but that depends on mandates from the state government and how the pandemic progresses.

The Council heard from Patrick Sullivan, the Director of the LACDC, who spoke about the impact of the quarantine on local businesses. The issue of the Anti-Donation Clause, which makes it difficult for the County to provide monetary support to any business, especially grants or subsidies, was discussed.

Councilor Sara Scott described her activities with the Mayors’ Council on Economic Recovery, and discussions they had regarding the impact of the pandemic on communities around the state. Councilor Randall Ryti mentioned the efforts of the Social Services Department to try to meet peoples’ needs. Councilor Sheehey spoke about regional efforts to help the communities of Northern New Mexico, and lobbying the legislature, which will be holding a Special Session soon.

Councilor Izraelevitz spoke about the impact on local non-profits, and mentioned some of the positive actions taken by groups like the Piecemakers Quilting Guild, Self Help, Los Alamos Community Foundation, Los Alamos Family Council, the Senior Center, the Teen

Center, etc. Councilman Izraelevitz helped start a local group called “All Together Los Alamos (ALTA),” which has helped high-risk people who are isolated and alone with grocery and medicine deliveries, etc. (Check their website if you can volunteer to help out.)

Other councilors mentioned the school system (Councilor Martin), the BMX track in White Rock (Councilor Maggiore), budget issues; then the County budget, which had been previously discussed, was approved. Phase II for reopening starts in June, so time will tell what can be opened safely.

As Harry Burgess said, “I certainly cannot predict the future.”

Leslie Wallstrom

May 26

Public comment was received opposing the proposed ‘Road Diet’ for Trinity Drive. There was also comment concerning the County’s failure to hold a hearing for UnQuarked.

A Public Hearing was held on a five-year lease of County land to the Los Alamos Dog Obedience Club for \$288 per month. The Club, which owns the building, has leased this site since 1973.

The consent calendar included the following:

- A memo of understanding between the County and NMDOT that increases federal funding for LAC transit operations because of the CARES Act.
- The award of a \$300,000 contract to Dekker/Perich/Sabatini for an update of Chapter 16 of the Development Code and Downtown Master Plans.

After presentation by County staff and considerable discussion, Council rejected by a vote of 4-3 the proposed Trinity Drive 'Road Diet,' which would have reduced Trinity from Diamond to Oppenheimer to one lane of through traffic in each direction.

Addie Jacobson

Board of Public Utilities

The Board of Public Utilities held its regularly scheduled meeting on May 20. Due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, the agenda only included time-sensitive matters. This included a contract amendment to Stantec Consulting for the purpose of upgrading DPU's asset management project into its Geographic Information System (GIS) software. The other agenda item was an update on the Utility Assistance Program. This is a program funded by customer donations to assist other qualifying customers with utility bill payments. Deputy Utilities Manager Bob Westervelt explained that donations to the program have increased since the pandemic began; however, actual applications for assistance have been few. He predicts that the DPU will probably see more applications in the upcoming months.

Julie Williams-Hill

May Lunch with a Leader: Maire O'Neill

Before she was introduced to the Zoom audience, Maire O'Neill told us that her first name is pronounced to rhyme with "Laura." After the audience was admitted, O'Neill explained that she was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1957, the eldest of six children. She attended a Catholic girls' school funded by the government. After leaving Ireland at 21 and spending five years working in Germany and France, she moved to

Beatty, Nevada, in 1983 where she worked for the *Death Valley Gazette*.

Later O'Neill moved to Tonopah, Nevada. Among her many activities, she was involved in the Yucca Mountain Project, worked for the Stealth Fighter program at Tonopah Test Range, and ran a bed and breakfast. She was also a stringer for the *Reno Gazette Journal* and *Nevada Magazine*. As a county commissioner, she flew on a DOE plane to Carlsbad to see WIPP when it was under construction. Her husband, Mike, a mining engineer, worked at Yucca Mountain.

For five years O'Neill lived in Washington State while her husband was working at Hanford. In 2005 she relocated to Los Alamos with her husband and daughter. After working at the *Los Alamos Daily Post* for a couple of years, she decided to "follow her dream." She started the *Los Alamos Reporter* in September, 2018; she runs it single-handed and says she loves what she does. There is no print edition and no advertising. O'Neill pays for her own lunch when she meets for interviews. She stated that the *Reporter* is not the paper of record (that is the *LADP*), so she is not beholden to the county.

O'Neill said that she covers some topics more than others, trying to provide information missing in the other papers; she tries to be balanced in her reporting. She follows the activities of the Regional Coalition of LANL Communities, the Northern NM Citizens' Advisory Board, and adds other local and regional stories that interest her. She will publish all letters to the editor. Currently she has volunteered to publish the photo and a paragraph about each of the 2020 high school graduates whose families write to her.

The *Reporter* is widely read; on some days it has been visited by 13,000 people! Asked about offensive comments on the *Reporter's* Facebook

page, O'Neill said that in two years she has deleted only ten. She encourages people to send her ideas for stories and also to call her at 412-8739. She said she is a good listener and sometimes can help the caller to resolve a problem.

In response to questions, O'Neill said that she is disappointed there has not been a hearing for UnQuarked. She spent an afternoon talking with staff in the Community Development Department, but they have not released an official statement.

Asked about her involvement with the endeavor to open a homeless shelter in Española, O'Neill explained that her efforts to help people in need extend back to her time in Nevada, when she volunteered to help people in the immigrant community there, many of whom were employed in the Amargosa Valley dairy industry. She remarked that she had first learned Spanish from the Catholic missal, in which English and Spanish were printed on opposite pages.

In Española O'Neill has met "amazing people" determined to open a shelter, including Ralph Martinez, who spoke recently at Voices of Los Alamos, and Roger Montoya. The shelter opened earlier than planned last winter when a group of homeless people was displaced from their temporary residence by a fire during a cold spell. O'Neill remarked that there are also families in Los Alamos in need of advocates. Asked if there are homeless people in Los Alamos, she said there are and they include teenagers. She agreed to research and report on the topic.

O'Neill concluded by repeating that she loves what she does, although she

will occasionally take time off to go fishing or to spend time with her husband or daughter.

Barbara Calef

2020 Primary Election and More

The 2020 Primary Election came to a close at 7 p.m. on June 2, but it took several more hours for the County Clerk's staff and "casual" election workers to finish counting the ballots (and complete the paperwork). The final results will not be announced until after the Canvass of Results on June 11, but unofficial results are posted at https://www.losalamosnm.us/government/elected_officials/county_clerk. LWVLA worked especially hard to educate voters for this election. In addition to producing our very first Primary Election Voter Guide, we held three virtual candidate forums. By the time the election was over, the forums had been viewed 800 times.



Candidates in the Democratic primary for County Council participate in the LWVLA candidate forum moderated by Voter Services Chair Lynn Jones (upper left) and Co-president Barbara Calef (second from left). Screenshot by Barbara Calef.

Looking ahead, LWVNM has asked Governor Lujan Grisham to call for legislation to extend the special election clause (vote by mail) to elections when there is a declared public health emergency. If such a bill is passed and signed by the governor, there will be no need for voters to apply for an absentee ballot during a public health emergency. Instead, a ballot would be sent to every qualified voter. The Legislature will convene for the Special Session on June 18, primarily to revise the budget that was passed last winter.

LWVNM has also requested the government to withdraw their motion to dismiss court oversight of the Yazzie/Martinez Compliance and to invest in priority funding for education in New Mexico. A court hearing on the request to dismiss oversight has been scheduled for June 29.

Barbara Calef

News of Kathy Taylor

Kathy Taylor, member of the LWVLA Board, has been ill. She was hospitalized at the Medical Center, then at Sombrillo, but has now been allowed to go home to her beautiful garden. She has handed the treasurer's job over to Rosmarie Frederickson, who previously served in that position for many years. Many thanks to Rosmarie for stepping in just now when memberships are being renewed and our new PayPal connection is on line.

Time to Renew Memberships!

We are happy that 60 of you have renewed your memberships without any threats. But that leaves quite a few others who are still missing in action. Note that there is a membership form at the end of this newsletter for you to print and mail, or

you may advance to the 21st century and go to our website (lwwlosalamos.org) and join using PayPal. Either way, we welcome you.

If you're not certain whether your membership is current, just email me at [Rebecca.shankland\(AT\)gmail\(DOT\)com](mailto:Rebecca.shankland(AT)gmail(DOT)com). Also, remember that all memberships and donations are now tax-deductible.

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: Rosmarie Frederickson

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, fill out and submit the membership form on page 9.

**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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