



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

- October 5 2nd Candidate Forum, Zoom, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- October 6 Absentee in-person voting begins, Council Chambers, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
- October 17 Early voting begins, Council Chambers & White Rock Town Hall, 8 a.m.-6 p.m.
- October 20 Lunch with a Leader, Liddie Martinez, Zoom, 11:45 a.m.
- October 20 Last day to request an absentee ballot
- October 26 Board Meeting, Zoom, 1 p.m.
- October 27 Last day to mail a ballot to the County Clerk
- October 31 Last day of early voting
- November 3 Election Day, 7 a.m.-7 p.m. Council Chambers, White Rock Town Hall,
Golf Course Meeting Room

Lunch with a Leader: Liddie Martinez

On October 20 at 11:45 a.m. Liddie Martinez will be our leader by Zoom. Martinez was recently appointed to the NM Economic Recovery Council by Governor Lujan Grisham. The 15-person council is composed of business leaders from across the state and is charged with developing a plan to responsibly reopen the economy and fully reactivate the healthcare system. Martinez is the Los Alamos Market President of Enterprise Bank and Trust AND is a regular monthly food column contributor to the *Los Alamos Daily Post*. In addition, she has

completed a cookbook of NM recipes. There will be a little of each of her endeavors in her presentation and plenty of time for those zooming in to ask questions.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

Co-President's Message: What Can the League Do in These Difficult Times?

We are at an historic moment in our democracy. This crucial election comes in the same year as the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage. It's a coincidence that they occur at the same time, but

it makes me think about what the League contributes to the quality and the tone of our democratic discourse.

The Constitution is silent on how candidates should campaign for office, but we know from the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates that public debates have been enshrined in our traditions. Lincoln and Douglas were only campaigning for the position of senator, but their seven debates were each three hours long and began with one-hour opening statements, presumably uninterrupted.

It's hard to imagine a candidate giving a one-hour speech now, but perhaps our political discourse needs more depth and serious argument, or what John Bartlit referred to as "worthy debate of the issues." During our forums, we limit candidate responses to 1 ½ minutes. Perhaps that is insufficient. During the forum on October 1, the responses from the candidates for PRC and NM Senate were surprisingly similar. Given more time, or the opportunity to respond to each other, they might have clarified their differences. Of course, we are somewhat constrained by the need to introduce multiple candidates for some offices.

The strength of our forums lies in the strict neutrality imposed by the League's policy of non-partisanship: The League's use of serious questions in a forum with strict use of time limits helps. As one candidate remarked, "I was a little frustrated because there is so much that needs to be discussed and just not enough time here. But I do appreciate you holding to rules and keeping it very civilized."

I applaud his awareness of the issues that face our forums: enough time to deal with issues effectively and the need to establish a dignified, mature level of discourse.

Becky Shankland

Welcome, New Members!

We want to welcome **Galen and Susan Gisler, Heather Quinn, and Elizabeth Weisbrod**; we hope they'll write about themselves in the next newsletter. Here are introductions from several other new members.

My-Linh Luong writes: I am a (remote) PhD student at the University of Melbourne and my partner's job brought me to Los Alamos. I was looking for more opportunities to build relationships in my local community and was energized to join the League of Women Voters-LA after seeing the LWV 100 Days and 100 Ways to Get Ready for Election Day post. This year, as I celebrate the centennial of women's right to vote, I also bring my Vietnamese-American heritage to my work in voting and have joined efforts to increase voter registration knowledge and turnout for all women voters, especially AAPIs! [maybe some of you need help here: Asian American Pacific Islanders]

Megan Green writes: I am a 10-year resident of Los Alamos and a hydrologist at the New Mexico Environment Department. I joined the League to support the good work you do in our community to help all citizens have access to voter and candidate information. I consider myself a Candidate Forum super fan! I am an avid seamstress; I love sewing clothing for myself and am currently working on earning a Certificate in Fashion Design from Santa Fe Community College to learn the more technical aspects of pattern drafting and design. I am Union Steward for CWA Local 7076, which represents state workers, and will soon be serving as the Secretary. In my other, other free time, I am the Outreach Team Lead for the Democratic Party of Los Alamos County and am involved in the new Racial Justice Action Advisory Council.

Maxine McReynolds writes: Although I am originally from the Pacific Northwest, I met TJ in Denver and in 2014 our family moved to New Mexico. With in-laws from the San Ildefonso and Española areas, the choice to “live on the Hill” was not an obvious one for us initially but we decided to settle in Los Alamos with our two small children in 2017. For over thirteen years, I have worked as a corporate lawyer and environmental attorney. I have a history of board service to women’s organizations, including with the Colorado Women’s Hall of Fame and one of Colorado’s largest domestic violence shelter and advocacy organizations. Recently, I helped launch an educational foundation for students from San Ildefonso and am excited to be joining LWVLA. I look forward to meeting you all and contributing in whatever way I can help best.

Nancy and John Bartlit are new members, but in fact Nancy is a member from many years ago, as I discovered when searching the archives for our yet-to-come library exhibit. So, having her back is an honor. She is not only a former county councilor but former president of the Historical Society and co-author of Silent Voices of World War II: When Sons of the Land of Enchantment Met Sons of the Land of the Rising Sun. Currently, she is working to revise it. Her company Pajarito Press LLC has recently produced three award-winning books. She is on the Historic Preservation Advisory Board. She attended the Santa Fe Parliamentary Unit workshop held last fall for League and Los Alamos citizens.

John, author of many newspaper columns and a founder of New Mexico Citizens for Clean Air and Water, writes: Slogans have replaced debate of a recent large and important issue. The issue is the great value of peaceful protest, while avoiding riots, looting, and arson. One side depicts "peaceful protest" and the other side depicts "riots, looting, and arson." The worthy

issue is how to keep peaceful protests and at the same time end riots, looting, and arson. The only real issue involved is rarely, if ever, debated in real terms.

Wendy Marcus writes: I am excited to become part of the League of Women Voters. I have lived in Los Alamos for 20 years and have two kids. My husband works at the Lab in IT. I am an attorney who specializes in estate planning, wills, trusts, etc. I have been working from home before it became necessary.

I grew up in the San Francisco area and went to UC Berkeley and University of Santa Clara. I practiced with a large law firm in San Francisco, before having the opportunity to move here. The Bay Area even at that time was expensive, filled with traffic and there was a general attitude of “keeping up with the Joneses.” We were thrilled to move to Los Alamos. It was a great place to raise our kids, who are now 24 and 28.

I am an active volunteer in the community and I do pro bono work for non-profits. I have helped many local non-profits become eligible for 501c3 tax status and with conflict of interest issues. I have always been politically involved and look forward to working with you all. I have served on the boards of the United Way, the LAPS parent advisory and the Los Alamos Employees Scholarship Fund.

My interests include politics, history, travel and the great outdoors. For this election and the last, I serve as the attorney on call for our County to go to court to help anyone with their right to vote on election day. I have previously worked to register voters.

Two Fascinating Stories about Suffragist and Los Alamos History from Nancy Bartlit

My mother was an active member in the LWV in the suburbs of Philadelphia whose interest in civics I copied. I may have joined her group after I came back from Japan in 1960, but I remember joining the Los Alamos League after John and I arrived in 1962. It was also a way to meet new friends and to be an active participant in local and state government. I took Marjorie Bell Chambers's history class, I believe it was in the mid-1970s, because I remember being so frustrated by the forces that opposed League positions on the environment and later positions for clean air and water from New Mexico Citizens for Clean Air & Water.

In those days Albuquerque (ABQ) media was not received by the towns and cities in the south of the state or those places close to the TX and AZ borders. Consequently, ranchers could retain their conservative power and positions because they could influence what their constituents believed about the legislative bills. So, their resistance helped to kill the positions of ABQ and Santa Fe officials trying to represent urban changes caused by populations and institutions from outside moving into the northern part of the state. Marjorie's classes helped one understand these forces. I have her lectures on cassette tapes.

Back in those early days (before children), the county was working on a charter and had a three-member commission. It was an exciting time to be interested. Also, I rang doorbells on behalf of the League to support county ownership of utilities so that a potential 14% profit on sales could increase the county's meager federal income for city/county services. The proposition won!

Farewell to Helene Suydam

Probably few of our current members knew Helene, who died recently at the age of 100. But she belonged to the League until a few years ago even though she wasn't able to come to meetings.

Also interesting is the discovery from the archives that she was a member in the very early days of the League in the late 1940's, where her name comes up often. Farewell, Helene.



Voter Services Report

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico and the four local Leagues in New Mexico, of which LWV-Los Alamos is one, spent a good part of August and September preparing the General Election Voter Guide found at www.VOTE411.org. It covers the bulk of New Mexico for state elections, and also most county level elections. The individual Leagues also produced a printed guide which was specific to their region. And so LWVLA produced our usual printed Los Alamos Voter Guide 2020, which came out in the *LA Daily Post* on Thursday, October 1. Copies can also be found in the lobby of the Municipal Building and at the Mesa Public Library book drop. Or find the LWVLA Voter Guide online on our website at www.lwvlosalamos.org.

Lynn Jones

Observer Corps Reports

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

County Council

September 8

The Council declared September 12 to be "Clean Up Los Alamos Day." This is an annual event typically held around Earth Day but postponed due to COVID.

The Council heard a petition from Racial Justice Los Alamos requesting a partnership with the Council on advancing several initiatives to promote racial equity in our community. The petition, as amended, asked the Council to formally condemn the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, along with other police killings of black and brown people, in our state and country; call for a national change in how police interact with people of color; publicly declare that Black Lives Matter; and commit to anti-racism work. It was then moved that the Council acknowledge the petition, thank the petitioners for their request, and request staff investigate the matter further and return to the Council by late October or early November with specific budget considerations. The motion passed unanimously.

It was reported that some of the top items included in the 2022-2026 State Infrastructure and Capital Improvement Plan included the expansion of a compost facility, support of affordable housing initiatives, funding for wildlife resistant containers, and funding for community recreation space.

The Council reappointed several members of the Tourism Implementation Task Force and appointed three new members.

It was reported that the County formally submitted an access agreement request to the National Nuclear Security Administration for areas in Los Alamos Canyon. The access agreement would allow residents to use the canyon for hiking, biking, tourism, and as an additional evacuation route should it be needed.

The final item of the night was the appeal of the Board of Appeals decision in Sirphey LLC, also known as Unquarked, which found that Unquarked failed to show that the issuance of a "red tag" stop work order was unlawful, arbitrary, or capricious. The Council found no evidence that the Board of Appeals decision was unlawful, arbitrary, or capricious, and voted unanimously to sustain the Board of Appeals decision.

Rebecca Chaiken

Work Session, Sept. 22

The Council was briefed by the Planning and Zoning Commission regarding current and proposed projects. The specific details are in the power point presentation as part of the archived meeting: <https://losalamos.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4642957&GUID=B3107B8E-46A9-49A2-97AE-E35B7D29E3D1&Options=&Search=>

There are multiple housing projects and some business development projects. Housing includes single residence and multi-unit housing. The Marriott Hotel/convention center is also on the list. There were many waivers mentioned during the presentation. They are mostly for parking and height waivers. Only a few of these waivers have been approved. There was an extensive question and answer session regarding the waivers, including questions about the approval/rejection process for waivers.

The Council voted unanimously to suspend the rules for a work session to allow for action items.

There was extensive discussion regarding bears in town and options for reducing the bear problems. Over 120 calls have been made to the police and the NM Department of Game and Fish regarding sightings so far this year. There has been one attack on a human, several bears have been relocated, and two bears killed. There were presentations by Councilor James Robinson, who has been very engaged in public education regarding bears in human environments. Sergeant Otero from Game and Fish also discussed the bear concerns. The bears are entering residential areas in greater numbers this year due to the drought and reduced food sources in the mountains. Bears need 6,000 calories per day to store fat for the winter hibernation period. Unprotected garbage bins on one street in Los Alamos can provide enough calories for two to three days in one visit. For bears, it is a very efficient and easy way to meet their needs. Once bears discover human food, they will return for more. Relocation of bears is not effective because the bears eventually return here, even when the distances are great.

Another source of food for the bears in Los Alamos is ripe, unpicked fruit from the numerous trees in town. Bears can smell the fruit from miles away. They also remember the sources and return repeatedly. The solution to the fruit tree source is to pick the trees clean and clear the fruit on the ground. There was a suggestion that any extra fruit the residence does not need can be donated to food shelters.

There was a discussion about new technology for locking the trash bins. The lock opens when the trucks lift the bins to dump them. The locks do not open when a bear knocks one over on the street. This technology, which is still under development, has been successfully tested with

grizzly bears, and will cost \$200+ per bin. There was also discussion regarding requiring residents to secure their trash bins, for instance, by storing them in the garage. It was noted that there are numerous residences that do not have enclosed garages. It is also effective to put the bins out the day of delivery, rather than the night before. However, it was noted the trash trucks make their rounds between 8 am to 4 pm, allowing opportunity for bear access on pick-up day. The bears do move from one community to another based on the trash pick-up schedule! There was discussion regarding citations for residents who do not secure their trash bins. There was opposition to this idea.

The County will continue to educate the public regarding bear activity and trash issues. They are looking into a grant that would allow for purchase of bear resistant bins. It is estimated that it will be 6 to 8 months before high tech bins would be available.

There was also extensive discussion regarding the multi-generational pool addition to the Aquatic Center. The cost has increased since the project was approved. That is not unusual for construction. The Council felt very strongly that support from the community for the new addition for the pool had been in place for many years, and the project should go forward despite the increased costs.

Ellen Mills

Board of Public Utilities

The Board of Public Utilities met virtually on September 16 for its regularly scheduled monthly meeting. Board members approved a ten-year water services contract with NNSA, which will align with a water rights agreement (also on a ten-year time frame). The term for both the water services and water rights agreements starts on October 1, 2020. Per the water services

agreement, DPU will provide water services to LANL and charge the wholesale rate.

To prepare the Department of Public Utilities for when PNM joins California's Western Energy Imbalance Market in April 2021, BPU members approved the addition of a full-time employee, additional software to assist with energy trading and forecasting, and the hiring of a consultant to assist with the transition. BPU members also approved the associated budget revision of \$238,000, although DPU staff advises that this effort will increase revenues for the department. This item will be forwarded to the County Council.

Los Alamos County and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) negotiated a union contract to cover a four-year period. The contract includes salary increases totaling 14 percent to be spread out until 2024, a grievance process and meal expenses. The contract was approved by the BPU and will be forwarded to the council for consideration.

Lastly, board members approved an amendment to the Advanced Metering Infrastructure contract to include a customer portal. The portal will allow customers who choose to sign up for near real-time access to the electric, gas and water consumption data from the meters. DPU plans to make this portal available to its customers at no charge should they choose to register. It is believed the additional information may assist customers in understanding consumption habits and make changes to save money and conserve.

Julie Williams-Hill

September Lunch with a Leader: Spent Nuclear Fuel Storage

Bobbi Merryman, a graduate student in nuclear engineering at UNM and a member of the LWVNM Spent Nuclear Fuel Storage Safety Committee, explained in detail how spent nuclear fuel can be stored at a temporary site. She provided a quick overview of the fuel itself and a history of the jurisdiction and policy background. Briefly, Congress has determined to dispose of

high-level waste and the spent nuclear fuel from power plants in a permanent repository. They funded years of research and study, mostly at Yucca Mountain in Nevada. In 2014 a federal court ordered the NRC to complete the safety and environmental reviews for the Yucca Mountain project. Merryman said that the reviews concluded that "Yucca Mountain complies with all environmental and safety regulations." However, congressional funding is needed to take a final decision on that site.



Bobbi Merryman, courtesy photo.

Meanwhile, spent fuel is accumulating at 99 sites around the country. Interim storage sites are especially needed for the spent fuel from decommissioned power plants. Merryman explained the design of the canisters used to contain the fuel rod assemblies and the concrete casks that house the canisters. She explained the design Holtec plans to use if they receive approval from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the site in south-eastern New Mexico and discussed some of the concerns and on-going studies related to temporary storage.

Merryman's talk was fairly technical, but accompanied by excellent slides, which have been posted on the LWVNM website:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MB8j2lWEi5Q1jkJBU8wF8ARZWYrdZoV8/view>

Unfortunately, her presentation was not recorded, but we are hoping it will be recorded and made available when she repeats it, possibly for the Santa Fe County League.

Barbara Calef

What Happens to the Absentee Ballots?

By law the county clerks can begin processing absentee ballots five days before Election Day. For the primary election the process in Los Alamos began at noon on Friday in the warehouse. There were nine workers: 1 Republican, 5 Democrats, 3 Decline to State. The clerk's staff had already checked under the flap to be sure there was a signature and divided the envelopes into groups of 25. The ballots were wheeled into the warehouse in locked boxes.

First, we counted to be sure each bundle contained 25 and verified the number on the documentation. We alphabetized the ~3,000 envelopes. Then, working in pairs, we checked off each ballot on the roster, making sure the oath was complete and correct (name, address, year of birth). We checked off about 1,500 that day.

We worked from 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. on Monday, June 2 and from 7 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. on Election Day. On Monday we began by finishing up with the envelopes from Friday and then we repeated the steps with the mail that had arrived since then. When information was missing (signature,

year of birth, address) we gave the ballots to the presiding judge, who turned them over to Gloria Maestas, our Elections Clerk. She and County Clerk Naomi Maestas called the voters to invite them to come in and "cure" the oath. On Election Day Naomi Maestas and two absentee ballot workers drove with her to the homes of people who were unable to travel to the Municipal Building.

The next step was to open the outer envelopes. To do that, we banged one end on the table so that when they were slit open by machine, the ballots would not be cut. Keeping the groups of 25, we removed the inner envelope, re-banding the outer envelopes. At that point the ballots became anonymous. The inner envelopes were then opened by banging and slitting.

Next, we removed the ballots and opened them. We checked to be sure the voter had used blue or black ink. If the ballot was damaged in any way, we put it in a box to be hand-tallied. The ballots were then counted and re-counted. A batch sheet was placed on each group of 25. We repeated the process as new mail arrived on Monday and on Election Day. When all the ballots were ready Tuesday afternoon, four of us worked with the two tabulators (Dominion ICC). A Dominion technician from Phoenix remained with us the entire time we were using the tabulator and gave advice as needed.

At each tabulator, one person feeds in the ballots while the other operates the machine and watches the screen. If there is a problem, the screen indicates the source. Most often the problem was caused by a turned-up edge at the top or bottom of the ballot. In that case, we put it on top of the pile and fed in the batch again.

When all the ballots had gone through the tabulator, two DTS workers reviewed the ballots the machine had highlighted, where a judgment

call was needed. Sometimes the voter had over-voted; other times there was a stray mark. Looking at the ballot on the screen, it was usually possible to determine the voter's intention and the machine would adjust the tally.

The scanned ballots from each tabulator were collected in a ballot box. When we finished, each box was labelled and locked. Meanwhile the other workers were engaged in the laborious process of hand tallying. Besides the ballots that the tabulators could not read, all the federal ones (from people in the military) were also hand-tallied.

There was documentation for every group of ballots; all of the absentee board workers had to sign every tally sheet. We counted 4576 absentee ballots and 25 were rejected. In addition, we closed down the early voting ballot boxes. Total votes cast: 5791. We were only allowed to leave when all of the reporting was completed. We had been told we might need to work until 2 a.m., but fortunately, we finished at 10:30 p.m. For the General Election, work must stop at 11 p.m. and continue on subsequent days.

Barbara Calef

Kathy and George Taylor's Memorial Bench To Be Dedicated October 12

Kersti Rock from the Los Alamos Garden Club and Becky Shankland from the League took charge of organizing for a memorial bench in the area around Ashley Pond as a memorial to Kathy and George Taylor: both gardening and politics were their passion, so Ashley Pond seemed an appropriate place to honor their memory with its closeness to a beautiful park and many civic buildings.

The county has now placed their bench with a plaque reading:

*KATHLEEN and GEORGE TAYLOR
With fond remembrance by your friends
In the Los Alamos Garden Club,
League of Women Voters,
Board of Public Utilities
And the Albuquerque Soaring Club in Moriarty.
May you soar together forever.*

We will hold a simple dedication on Friday, October 9, 10 a.m. at Ashley Pond with people encouraged to bring a single flower to put in a vase and then take home a different one at the end. Sharing memories will also be encouraged but optional. Of course, masks and social distancing will be required.

They will be greatly missed by many people in the community.



The bench dedicated to Kathy and George Taylor. Photo by Kersti Rock.

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 11 or visit www.lwvlosalamos.org.



The LWVLA Board of Directors for 2020-2021.

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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