



UPDATE

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

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Calendar

- April 23 Voices of Los Alamos, Dede Feldman, Unitarian Church, 6:30-7:30 p.m.
- April 26 Board Meeting, Mesa Public Library, noon
- May 3 Candidate Forum, UNM-LA, 7 p.m. (6:30 p.m. for refreshments)
- May 8 Early Voting Begins
- May 9 Candidate Forum, Fuller Lodge, 7 p.m. (6:30 p.m. for refreshments)
- May 15 Lunch with a Leader, Library Manager Eileen Sullivan, Mesa Public Library, 11:45 a.m.
- May 19 LWVNM Council, Albuquerque, 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
- June 5 **Primary Election Day**

Lunch with a Leader: Library Manager Eileen Sullivan

Our May 15 Lunch with a Leader speaker will be Library Manager Eileen Sullivan, who came on as the new director last July. Eileen brings much experience to the table. She worked for seven years as the library director in Silver City. She will share new ideas she has for the Los Alamos library and discuss the changes she has already instituted.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

Vote in the Primary Election!

The primary election is fast approaching. Voters who are registered as Democrats, Republicans, or Libertarians will be offered the opportunity to vote for

candidates in their party. Many of the positions are uncontested within each party. The League has invited all of the candidates facing opposition in the primary to participate in a candidate forum.

The first forum is for the six Democrats running for County Council and the two Republicans running for County Sheriff. It will be held on Thursday, May 3, at UNM-LA at 7 p.m., with refreshments and conversation with the candidates at 6:30 p.m.

The candidates for County Council (four positions open) are David Izraelevitz, Quentin David Dimick, Sara C Scott, James N Robinson, Randall T Ryti, and Timothy Thomas Morrison (all Democrats). The candidates for County Sheriff are James William Whitehead and Hugh J Rich (both Republicans).

On Wednesday, May 9 we will hold a forum at Fuller Lodge, also beginning at 7 p.m., with refreshments at 6:30 p.m. For the second forum we have invited

the candidates for First Judicial District Court Judge, Divisions 2 and 5. For Division 2 the candidates are Gregory S Shaffer, Donna M Bevacqua-Young, Maria E Sanchez-Gagne, and Jerry A Archuleta. For Division 5 the candidates are Jason Lidyand and Matthew Jackson. All of the judicial candidates are Democrats; there is no Republican opposition. Hence, the winner in each division will become the only candidate for the November election. Also coming are House District 43 Democratic candidates Pete Sheehey and Christine Chandler.

Before the general election in November, we will hold a round of forums for ALL of the candidates on the November ballot.

If you have not registered, or if you wish to change your registration so that you can vote in the primary, you can do so online at <https://portal.sos.state.nm.us/OVR/WebPages/InstructionsStep1.aspx>, or at the County Clerk's office in the Municipal Building. The deadline is May 10.

You may vote early at the County Clerk's office Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. from May 8 to June 1. From May 19 to June 2 the Council Chambers

and the White Rock Town Hall will be open for early voting from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday to Saturday.

On June 5, Primary Election Day, the vote centers will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers, the White Rock Town Hall, and the Golf Course Community Building.

Absentee ballots are due to the County Clerk by 7 p.m. on June 5.

Barbara Calef

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2018-19

Officers

Co-Presidents: Barbara Calef and Rebecca Shankland
1st VP: *not filled*
2nd VP: Leslie Wallstrom
Treasurer: Kathy Taylor
Secretary: Rosmarie Fredrickson



Board of Directors voted into office at the Annual Meeting on Tuesday, April 17, 2018: (top row, left to right) Amy Birnbaum, Sandra West, Karyl Ann Armbruster, Ellen Mills, Akkana Peck, Julie Williams-Hill, (bottom row, left to right) Lynn Jones, Rebecca Shankland, Barbara Calef, and Leslie Wallstrom. Photo by Jean Dewart.

Directors

Reservations: Amy Birnbaum
Lunch with a Leader: Karyl Ann Armbruster
Membership: Rebecca Shankland
Voter Services: Lynn Jones
Webmaster and Social Media: Julie Williams-Hill
Newsletter Editor: Sandra West
Publicity: Jody Benson
Director at Large: Akkana Peck
Director at Large: Ellen Mills

Off-Board Directors

Arrangements: *not filled*
Fundraising: *not filled*
Observer Corps: Julie Williams-Hill
Observer Corps: Lynn Jones
Nominating Committee: *not filled*

Co-President's Message: Watchers, Waiters, and Workers

During the past year we've lost people who have moved away, including Mary Van Eeckhout, Gale Zander Barlow, and Tarin Nix, who were definitely Workers (Mary doing set-ups for public event refreshments, Gale following the lawsuit called Our Children's Trust, and Tarin keeping track of membership). Luckily, we can still follow Tarin as she works for the legislature in Santa Fe.

We have also gained many new members. Already three of them have joined our board as Workers: Leslie Wallstrom, Sandra West, and Ellen Mills. Cristina Olds and Elena Georgi are amazing Workers who organize Voices of Los Alamos meetings for civic discussions.

I think that all League members qualify as Watchers and Waiters by virtue of supporting our organization.

We are so pleased to have all these new members who have joined this year:

Rosemary Alme
Judy Buckingham
Jean Dewart
Elena Georgi

Kristin Henderson
Yvonne Keller
Brenda Kelley
Joan Lucas
JoAnn Lysne
Pat McCormick
Jenni Macke
Cas Mason
Ellen Mills
JJ Mortensen
Cristina Olds
Antonio and Shelby Redondo
Dotty Reilly
Shirley Roman
Susannah Rousculp
Jack and Beverly Shlachter
Janice Trujillo
Leslie Wallstrom
Sandra West
Robert Williams

Thanks for all the Watching and Waiting that you do by supporting the League!

Becky Shankland

March Lunch with a Leader: Robert Gibson, "Making Sausage: Observations of a Fly on the Wall at the Merry Roundhouse"

Robert Gibson's March 20 talk to Lunch with a Leader recounted his experiences and observations as a legislative analyst at the New Mexico Roundhouse for the past four legislative sessions. He promised to take us beyond Civics 101, and definitely fulfilled his promise.

Gibson described his role at the legislature as one who writes the "Cliff Notes" for the legislators, who don't have time to read and analyze all the bills. Analysts look for both intended and unintended consequences of bills as well as their fiscal impact. The Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) prepares a Fiscal Impact

Report of each bill; Gibson recommended reading this as a quick guide to a bill since it contains a summary and clarifications.

All legislative committees have majority and minority party analysts, but they also have “neutral” analysts who serve the whole committee. For example, analysts for the Judiciary Committee summarize pages of legalese into plain English. When working on bills, analysts are not allowed to lobby. If asked for an opinion, analysts can give one, but they do not offer their opinion unsolicited.



Robert Gibson also spoke at the one of our 2016 forums. Photo courtesy of Los Alamos Daily Post.

This year was a 30-day session, during which the legislature is required only to pass a budget. Because there was “new money,” the budget was able to restore money lost from previous years of extreme austerity. Bill #1, the “Feed Bill,” pays the legislators and always passes first. Then comes Bill #2, the appropriations bill, which passed without much controversy compared to previous years.

The audience asked when the legislators learn what the governor wants; Gibson said there was little input from the governor until the very end when she/he signs or vetoes the bills. He noted that most governors

have very little experience with the legislature and that communication is not very good in general.

Three major types of legislation occur. Bills must be passed by both houses with the same wording and then go to the governor for signature or veto. Resolutions have legal effect but do not go to the governor; this is how constitutional amendments get on the ballot. Memorials can be House, Senate, or Joint. Some are significant, such as those requesting a study, but many are just window dressing to satisfy a person or group. This year there were 1100 pieces of legislation, of which 580 bills were offered and 80 passed. One year had 7000 pieces of legislation!

Despite what Gibson called “structural chaos,” much gets done. The real work is in the committees; a bill is often referred to as many as three, occasionally four to six. Bills must go through committees in sequence. The committee hearings are published in advance. They begin with the presentation of a bill by the bill’s sponsor, who may be joined by a lobbyist or expert. Then the public may comment. While we are usually allowed three minutes of comment in Los Alamos, the NM legislature expects short comments; if you agree with an earlier comment, you just say so.

While much discussion about bills occurs privately, all actions must be public. Bills in committee are sent on with designations “Do Pass,” “Without Recommendation,” or “Do Not Pass.” If the committee truly wishes to kill a bill, it is tabled. However, it can be brought back by someone who voted to table—this explains why there is occasionally a vote to table by a legislator who wants the bill to pass, but doesn’t currently have the votes. In addition, appropriations and taxation committees discuss and table everything, then bring back those items that they want to pass.

Once bills have made it through their assigned committees, they are brought to the floor. No public input occurs there. It is mostly grandstanding because most people know how they will vote. The House has a three-hour time limit per bill and then they vote. Most bills that make it to the floor are passed by large margins. Most memorials pass with “full membership,” which is a formality that doesn’t depend on members actually being present to take the vote.

All these steps take time, but things accelerate at the end of the session. What might take 25 days at the start can happen in one day at the end.

Questions about the legislature abound. Should we have longer sessions? paid legislators? Gibson thinks we should take what we have and make it better.

Several changes could save time. Legislators could stop the introductions of special people that eat up a lot of time. They could resist the excessive memorials that take up to one half of the floor time. They could reduce the number of bills since only 10% to 15% pass, and 50% are just to appease a friend, or lobbyist, or use as a campaign talking point. They could limit the number of bills each legislator can introduce—bills have been introduced to make this happen but they haven't passed.

Gibson said he enjoys being at the Roundhouse. He has always been interested in policy, and likes seeing the entire process unfold.

Lynn Jones and Becky Shankland

April Lunch with a Leader: Kurt Steinhaus, Superintendent of LAPS

Superintendent Kurt Steinhaus spoke on April 17 to a full house about Los Alamos Public Schools (LAPS) funding and its effect on innovation in the Los Alamos schools. He briefly described the distribution of funds, noting that thanks to the \$8 million annual payment from the DOE, Los Alamos is the only school district with a full-time nurse, guidance counselor, and arts instruction in every school.

The focus of the talk was on innovations in education that are made possible by an allocation in the LAPS budget and the efforts of the school district teachers.

In the middle school:

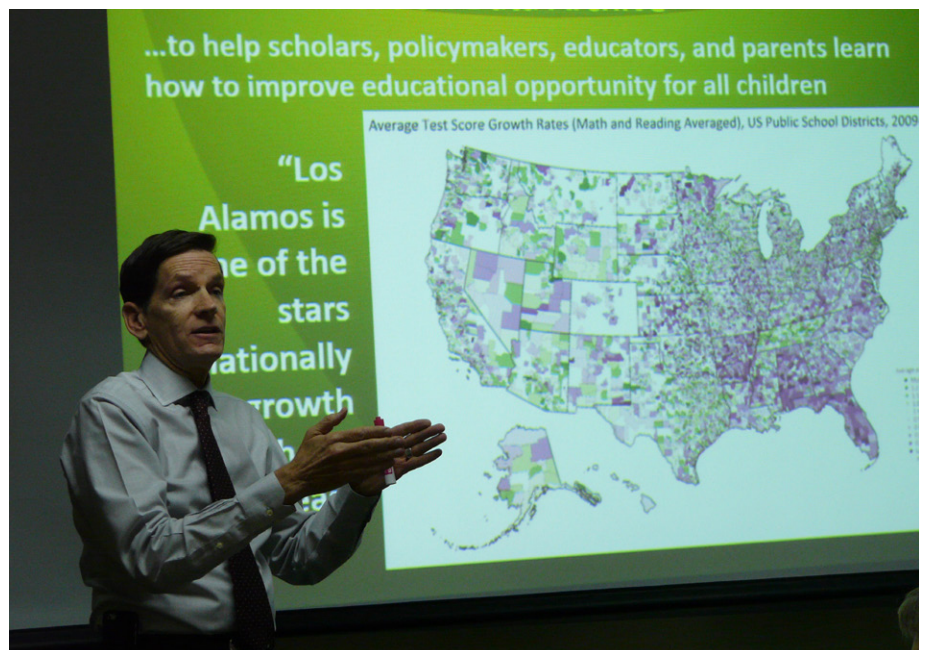
- Every student is given a

Chromebook for schoolwork.

- The AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) elective program is offered to help B or C students develop the skills they need to be successful in college. The program places special emphasis on improving writing, critical thinking, teamwork, organization, and reading skills. A group of the middle school teachers have volunteered to develop their own program, which they are calling SOAR, to replace the commercial program.
- New electives being offered include forensics, astronomy, and jazz band.
- Saturday School is a voluntary program that offers students the opportunity to get extra help from teachers and catch up on schoolwork on Saturday mornings.

Steinhaus also talked about the graduation rate in Los Alamos. At 87% last year, it had improved over the previous year (83%) and is far above the state average of 71%. However, he wants every student to graduate.

He is working to implement Project Search, a program for students with significant intellectual and developmental disabilities in their last year at the high school. To implement the program, he needs to find businesses in town that will participate, offering the



Dr. Kurt Steinhaus, superintendent of the Los Alamos Public Schools, tells the League of Women Voters about some of their innovative programs. Photo by Rebecca Shankland.

students internships to facilitate the transition from school to work.

Current innovations at the high school include:

- The Freshman Academy, a separate facility, has been developed for all high school freshmen.
- Dual credit allows the students to enroll in courses at UNM-LA.
- The Student Success Center offers students the option of obtaining a pass to receive individual assistance with subject matter. This is also available at the middle school.
- The high school now offers schedule flexibility for students who don't function well first thing in the morning.

Steinhaus listed many other innovations for 2018-2019 such as expanded pre-K at Pinon; Summer Institute: development classes for teachers and instructional assistants; and maker spaces for hands-on learning in the elementary and middle schools.

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Assessments are currently underway in New Mexico. Steinhaus explained that the success of Los Alamos students means that their proficiency cannot improve as much as that of lower achieving kids in other school districts. Furthermore, the results are misleading because they compare the performance of the students in one year to the students in the next year rather than showing what each group has accomplished. The results are not available until after the end of the school year. He believes it would be more helpful to use the results of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test, which is administered to the same group of students at the beginning, middle, and end of the year and actually measures growth. Short cycle assessment is needed, and the system the state is using to grade the schools is misleading because it reflects progress, not absolute ranking. We need strong leadership at the state government level to improve the assessment system and the public education system in general.

Barbara Calef

Annual Meeting Report: LWVLA Celebrates a New League Year

Introducing Our Board. At our Annual Meeting in April, we begin a new League year with a board comprised of our continuing tried and true board members and some wonderful new folks—Leslie Wallstrom as 2nd vice-president, Sandra West as newsletter editor, and Ellen Mills as director-at-large.

Leslie Wallstrom is a grant writer for the YMCA and also works as a guide at the Bradbury Science Museum. She is just finishing raising three daughters and is very involved with the public schools and her church. She'll be our new 2nd vice-president.

Sandra West has been on the Environmental Sustainability Board and was Marketing Manager at PEEC. Now she's doing educational programs at PEEC and helps people improve their posture through exercise. She'll be our newsletter editor, replacing Wayne Archer, last year's editor, whom we thank for all his help.

Ellen Mills recently retired from the Los Alamos Public Schools, where she taught special education and was president of the teachers' union. She'll be a new Director at Large.

The rest of the board continues: Barbara Calef and Becky Shankland, co-presidents; Rosmarie Frederickson, secretary; Kathy Taylor, treasurer; Karyl Ann Armbruster, Lunch with a Leader; Jody Benson, publicity; Amy Birnbaum, reservations; Lynn Jones, voter services and County Council observer; Akkana Peck, director at large; Julie Williams-Hill, webmaster, social media, and BPU observer.

We are happy that Kyle Wheeler has recently joined the Transportation Board and will be an observer there for us. Jean Dewart, a new member, has been appointed to the Planning and Zoning Commission, so she will be able to alert us when they schedule topics of interest. Another new member, Susannah Rousculp, may be willing to help with arrangements at forums, but we'd welcome more hands on that easy but important task as we move into a year filled with candidate forums. We still lack membership and

fund-raising chairs and committees, since Becky was serving pro tem and Suzie Havemann is needing to be free for family care. These are once- or twice-a year tasks.

Our Program for 2018-2019

Candidate Forums, Voter Guide, Voter Registration.

As always in election years, we'll be busy with these major responsibilities to the community. We'll want to continue registering voters, having started off with registering 17 young people at their school walkout in support of expanded gun laws. Remember that 17-year-olds are eligible to vote in the primary (June 5) as long as they will be 18 before general election day (November 6).

Requests for Action. At the Program Planning meeting, members asked us to follow these issues:

- Transportation: Encourage weekend service for Atomic City Transit.
- Sustainability: Seek improvements in education about recycling, make the White Rock disposal site friendlier. Ask if the League can be a sounding board for recycling literature to make sure it is effective.
- Environment, Land Use and Transportation: Follow these issues with an observer. Jean Dewart may be able to help with this.
- The Development Code needs to be updated.
- Find out who is in charge of the County water and conservation plans.
- Legislative Reform: This is a state issue, but the members would like to study how to improve our state government.

Proposed Forum

At the February 22 LWVLA Board meeting it was proposed that before the General Election we hold a forum on early childhood education in New Mexico with a panel to discuss successful programs and methods for financing them. We have now scheduled this event for September 6, and we welcome people to help plan it.

Please stay involved as we pursue our League program in 2018-2019!

Becky Shankland

Member News

Liz Bennett

We were sad to hear of the death of our long-time member Liz Bennett. She was involved in the League for many years, as well as being a volunteer for Scouts, the Wildlife Center, and Jemez House Thrift Store.

George Best, Living Treasure

George Best and his wife Elizabeth, who died several years ago, have been faithful League members for a long time. Besides teaching computer classes at the Senior Center, George has volunteered at Bandelier for many years—and has accumulated more volunteer hours over the years than one can imagine. He'll be honored as a Living Treasure at 2 p.m., Sunday, April 22 at Crossroads Church, 97 East Road.

Call to LWVNM Council

A link to the spring issue of the state newsletter, La Palabra, was sent out electronically on Thursday. You can also read it here: <http://www.lwvnm.org/newsletters/Spring2018.pdf>. LWVNM will hold a Council on May 19 this year from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the MCM Elegante, 2020 Menaul Blvd NE in Albuquerque. The speaker will be James Jimenez, Executive Director of NM Voices for Children. His topic is rural and urban poverty in the state. All League members are invited to attend. If you wish to go, please fill out the registration form in La Palabra.

Observer Corps Reports

County Council

At the County Council meeting on April 3, Council passed a resolution declaring a moratorium on all new notices and citations for code violations for sixty days, except for those initiated by citizen complaints and those affecting increased fire risk or health, safety, and welfare. On May 1 the Council will discuss creating the Community Advisory Board, which may consider code compliance issues and/or larger neighborhood improvement efforts.

The County Council on April 3 also agreed that they will contract with Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) to provide services for our Public Health Office here in Los Alamos that the New Mexico Department of Health is refusing to provide. Our office has been effectively closed for the past year. In the budget session of April 16th, Council provided for this plan within the budget for the Community Services Department. It will still be six months to a year before we see the Public Health Office open again.

On April 10 there was a joint Board of Public Utilities (BPU)/County Council meeting to decide whether the Department of Public Utilities and the County will continue to participate in the Carbon Free Power Project (CFPP). This is also referred to as the Small Nuclear Reactor project. After extensive discussion the vote was to proceed, with the BPU voting four to one in favor, and Council voting four to three in favor.

On April 16 and 17 the County Council held their annual budget meetings, and Council adopted the published budget with only slight modifications. The County departments are planning on a flat budget for fiscal years '19 and '20. Once the county knows if the LANL contractor will be a non-profit or a for-profit entity (hopefully they will know by June), the Council will adjust the budgets up or down prior to the start of the County fiscal year in July.

Lynn Jones

Board of Public Utilities

On April 10 the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) and County Council held a special meeting to decide on the County's continued participation in the Carbon Free Power Project. The Department of Public Utilities (DPU) recommended that the BPU and Council approve signing a Power Sales Contract with three future off-ramps to continue in the project that utilizes small modular nuclear reactor technology. The BPU voted four to one in favor, and the Council, voted four to three in favor. The first off-ramp is next year in 2019.

The regularly scheduled BPU meeting was held on April 18. Restructuring the electric rate was discussed at length, with no decision made by the BPU. The intent is to arrive at a rate structure that adequately and fairly compensates customers for energy produced by their distributed energy systems, but still recovers the DPU's fixed costs to maintain and operate the distribution grid. The BPU asked the Department to come back in a future meeting with more details for further discussion.

Julie Williams-Hill

Voices of Los Alamos: Dede Feldman

Former New Mexico state senator, journalist, and professor of political science Dede Feldman will be the speaker at the April 23 Voices of Los Alamos meeting. Feldman's presentation will be based on her new book, *Another Way Forward*, which highlights the work of non-profits, social enterprises, and grassroots organizations supporting economic development and healthy communities. This free event is 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Church, 1738 N. Sage Loop, Los Alamos.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LOS ALAMOS

MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Phone(s): _____ E-mail _____

- Check here to receive our local newsletter Update as an electronic file, saving us postage
OR Check here if you prefer the newsletter mailed in hard copy.
Check here if you wish to receive occasional—friendly reminders of upcoming events by e-mail.

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

- Single membership: \$45
Household membership (two+ people at the same address): \$65
Single Sustaining membership: \$75
Household Sustaining membership (two+ people at the same address): \$95
Contribution: \$ _____

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

- Topics of Interest: Affordable Housing, Local Government, Education, Elections, Voting Rights, Water Issues, Land Use, Health Care, Money in Politics, Sustainability, Living Wage, Public Transportation, Environment, Other topics (please suggest):
Ways to Help with League Activities: Set up Refreshments at Forums, Observer Corps (County Council, DPU, etc.), Nominating Committee, Voter 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 the board

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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