



UPDATE

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Los Alamos
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League of Women Voters of Los Alamos

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Calendar

July 21	Lunch with a Leader, Senator Jaramillo, Zoom, noon-1 p.m.
July 28	Board Meeting, Zoom, noon

Lunch with a Leader: **State Senator Leo Jaramillo**

Our next Lunch with a Leader will be from noon to 1 p.m. on Thursday, July 21 via Zoom and the speaker will be State Senator Leo Jaramillo, who was elected in November 2020. Senator Jaramillo currently serves as the Vice Chairman of the Rules Committee and serves as a member of the Corporations and Transportation Committee in the New Mexico Senate. He actually represents only Los Alamos while Senator Bobby Gonzalez represents White Rock.

Senator Jaramillo is a proud alumnus of Española Valley High School. He says that a sense of dedication to public service was instilled in him at a young age by his family. His passion for advocating for his community led him to an elected position on the Rio Arriba County Commission, where he served as chairman of the board prior to being elected to the New Mexico State Senate. Senator

Jaramillo champions Northern New Mexico's children, seniors, farmers, ranchers, and individuals suffering from drug and alcohol addiction.

The senator earned his bachelor's degree in Mass Communication and Journalism from the University of New Mexico and went on to earn his master's degree in Curriculum Design and Instructional Leadership from the College of Santa Fe. He has been an educator, news writer/producer, and financial business analyst. He is currently the Staff Operations Manager for the Associate Laboratory Director of Facilities and Operations at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

Karyl Ann Armbruster

Co-President's Message: Prohibition and Abortion

This month's Co-President's Message has a guest author. Thomas Shankland wrote this piece on May 20, 2022, just before the Supreme Court overturned Roe vs. Wade. He was struck by the parallel issues raised by that decision and the 18th Amendment prohibiting the manufacture and sale of alcohol. Tom wrote this shortly before his death on June 26, 2022.

The probable Supreme Court abortion ban has a parallel with the 18th Amendment (1920-1933) that prohibited the manufacture and sale of alcohol and that led to the lawless '20s. That Constitutional Amendment differs from possible abortion restrictions in that it was at least voted in by a majority of states, and a later majority found it untenable (the 21st Amendment). An additional difference is that an abortion ban would derive from the influence of three Supreme Court justices selected by the (arguably) most corrupt president in US history, who lost the popular vote in his election. Nevertheless, such a ban could be regarded as a constitutional precedent, the closest action to an actual amendment, for generations.

Prohibition turned out to be solidly unpopular because a large part of the US population felt that it took away a customary "right" to which citizens had long been accustomed and that they had no intention of abandoning. Hence, many people ignored those technically legal rules and simply disobeyed them. More than a decade of such flouting of the law followed, and it enabled a scofflaw culture in which defying a constitutional amendment was endemic at every level of society--and outlaws thrived.

To ban abortion, a right most citizens feel is needed and legitimate, will create predictable social effects: a clandestine nexus of illegal pill distribution; an underground railroad of transportation to more tolerant locations; the pain and mortality from inadequate medical care. Just as poisonous, perhaps worse, to a civil society will be damage to the Supreme Court, the third branch of government, that will be perceived as just a political branch of an undemocratic society and thus ethically tainted.

These arguments partially outline some predictable, unpleasant consequences of a judicial decision that ignores personal freedom and human nature.

Thomas Shankland for Rebecca Shankland

Welcome, New Member!

Democrats, and cleaning up local trails. When not writing or volunteering, she can be found gardening, cooking, or hiking.

Stephanie Nakhleh is a freelance writer who grew up in Los Alamos and returned in 2015. Her work has appeared in many local publications. Her volunteer work has included organizing and outreach for the New Mexico chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, serving on the Los Alamos Parks and Recreation Board and Planning and Zoning Commission, canvassing for

Observer Corps Reports – County Council LAPS – Special Session June 12

The hybrid special joint session of the County Council and the Los Alamos Public School Board (LAPS) was attended by Council Chair Ryti and Councilors Derkacs, Hand, Izraelevitz, Lepsch, Reagor, and Scott. LAPS staff present included Superintendent Dr. José Delfin and Assistant Superintendent Stephanie Guy. School Board members in attendance were President Melanie Colgan and board members Christine Bernstein, Antonio Jaurique, and Ellen Specter. Board member Erin Green was absent. Our observer report is based upon discussion during the meeting and materials provided in the meeting agenda packet, which included the consultant's conceptual expansion plan for replacement of the White Rock elementary schools.

Council and School Board final decisions

The Council unanimously approved partnering with LAPS to expand recreation spaces and other spaces available to the community in the White Rock elementary schools for an amount not to exceed \$7.5 million for design and construction. The County Manager will work with LAPS to develop the necessary agreements regarding funding and use of the space and will bring a budget adjustment to Council at a future meeting. The School Board unanimously accepted County participation to expand recreation and other spaces at the White Rock elementary schools.

Replacement of White Rock elementary schools

Presentations by the architectural and design firm Dekker/Perich/Sabatini and Assistant Superintendent Guy explained the schools' needs and outlined project options for County financial support. Piñon and Chamisa elementary schools in White Rock were constructed in 1964 and 1968, respectively. The State of New Mexico determined that

these two schools are inadequate and must be torn down and rebuilt. The State will provide 20% of the school replacement costs, with LAPS responsible for the remainder. The \$20 million school bond passed by voters in 2019 will pay for demolition and reconstruction of the two schools. Project completion will be the purpose of another school bond to be proposed in 2024. Construction is scheduled to begin at Piñon in May 2023 and at Chamisa in May 2024, with a target date for completion by August 2025. Construction will be ongoing while school is in session.

Proposed partnership of County with LAPS

During LAPS planning meetings, the community expressed overwhelming desire for more spaces to be available for after-hours activities. With County support for the project, there are options to expand the gym area to full-court size at Piñon and/or Chamisa elementary schools, and to enlarge a multipurpose room off of one of the pods at Chamisa.

County Manager Lynne explained that this collaboration has been in the works for some time. The County and LAPS went to the state legislature together and were successful in getting some upfront funding for additional space in White Rock and on North Mesa. Lynne added, "I think what we're looking for from Council is really a conceptual framework for us to move forward with. First and foremost is a dollar amount, if Council is interested in pursuing any of this. ... My perspective is that we pretty much need to have a relatively high-level framework and agreement with the schools and let them manage their project."

Council discussion on proposed motion

Council discussion about the draft motion centered on whether to just specify a dollar amount or to include specific projects in the motion. Councilors agreed with Councilor Scott's suggestion to add \$1 million to the \$6.5 million in the draft motion to cover design as well as construction costs. Councilor Derkacs preferred that the Council list the specific projects supported by Council at the different schools rather than issue "just a blank check."

She felt Piñon school would be the better choice for the gym, but agreed with Councilor Hand that there was sufficient funding already allocated by Council to also cover the pod at Chamisa. "That would give something to both schools, and also stay within our budget," she said. However, the majority of Council agreed with Councilor Izraelevitz's opinion, which was to set a dollar amount and not tie the hands of the design team by specifying the projects.

Additional details on the proposed projects and discussions at this special joint meeting are provided in the article by Kirsten Laskey published in the *Los Alamos Daily Post* on June 16, 2022 <https://ladailypost.com/county-gives-support-for-shared-recreational-spaces-in-new-white-rock-schools/>

June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin

Observer Corps Reports – County Council – June 14

The session was conducted remotely via Zoom, attended by Council Chair Ryti and Councilors Derkacs, Hand, Izraelevitz, Lepsch, Reagor, and Scott. Our observer report is based upon discussion during the meeting and documentation provided in the full agenda packet for the meeting. Most of the agenda items were of an administrative or business nature and are not covered in this report.

LAPS infrastructure project

The Council unanimously approved the transfer of funds from the County Economic Development Fund to the Los Alamos Public Schools (LAPS) Capital Allocation Fund for two projects: the Pajarito Complex roof and HVAC system (FY22, \$1M), and general maintenance and upgrades to Wing 400 of the Pueblo Complex (FY23, \$1M). In response to a question from Councilor Scott, Ms. Susan Odegard-Fellows (LAPS Strategic Assets Coordinator) said that lease revenues generated for LAPS by these two facilities are \$600K/yr for the Pueblo Complex 400 Wing and \$750K/yr for Pajarito Complex.

Demolition of Hilltop House Hotel

The Council unanimously approved the award of a contract to demolish the Hilltop House Hotel. Demolition will start in mid-July. Refuse and debris will be trucked to a disposal facility outside the county. Residents can expect two to four trucks per day moving off the site. Still under consideration is whether or not to stipulate use of the Truck Route instead of Main Hill Road. Removal of the underground fuel tanks is not included because they do not pose an imminent hazard to public health and safety; tank removal will be the responsibility of the property owner.

Vendor placement at summer concert series

During the time allocated on the agenda for the County Manager's report, Anne Laurent, Deputy County Manager, read a long, written statement describing the process and protocols followed by the County to place vendors at the summer concert series, and responding in detail to concerns expressed by Sirphey about its experiences with the vendor program thus far. During the public comment period at the end of the Council session, Ms. Nucklos, speaking for Sirphey, gave a spirited rebuttal to Laurent's statement.

Trail closures

The topic of fireworks restrictions led to much discussion about trail closures. Councilor Reagor asked, "Where's the authority for the fire chief to place restrictions on trail use come from?" County Attorney Leaphart replied that the authority derives from the International Fire Code adopted by Los Alamos County Council. Within that code, certain authority is delegated to the fire chief and fire marshal. There is a process for appealing decisions of the fire marshal. Councilor Reagor then asked about the legal justification for extending the fire marshal's authority to include county trail closures as part of the Stage 3 restrictions, given that non-motorized trail users do not pose fire risks. Fire Chief Hughes replied that including trail closures follows the same logic as the

decisions made for the National Forests in New Mexico. Agreeing with Councilor Reagor, Councilor Hand remarked, "Since the County Attorney has indicated there is a way to appeal some of the decisions that were made previously, maybe revisiting that could be in order because this seems to be happening more and more frequently these days with trail closures, etc. It may not be an immediate thing that we can change but I think that the direction that we're going year to year, it's getting worse. At least we're showing some kind of support for the community, what they want to do. They love the community because of the outdoor space and, although we are supportive of public safety, we need to look at whether or not some of the activities we're restricting are really high risk."

Information not on agenda or in agenda packet

County resident Maire O'Neill pointed out that several of the presentations and discussions at the meeting addressed items of great interest to the community, but that these topics were neither on the agenda nor in the agenda packet. These items included the COVID update by Ms. Matteson, Ms. Laurent's presentation about mobile food vendors, and the discussion on county trails, with two councilors relaying public input they have received. O'Neill said that, because these items were not on the agenda nor in the agenda packet, "there's no way for a member of the public to go on to find any of what you said this evening on any of those topics. There's no way to trace it back. You can put it into search, the registrar, it will never come up." O'Neill concluded, "I would respectfully ask, if there is going to be an update on something like this, that it be included as an agenda item and that, at the very least, that the presentation be included in the agenda packets."

June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin

Observer Corps Reports – Planning and Zoning Commission – June 8

The hybrid meeting held by the Planning & Zoning (P&Z) Commission on June 8, 2022, was attended by Commission Chair Adler and Commissioners Hill, Martin, Nakhleh, and Neal-Clinton. Commissioner Roberson was absent.

Training on quasi-judicial proceedings

County Attorney Alvin Leaphart and Assistant Attorney Kevin Powers presented training on the quasi-judicial process that governs P&Z decisions. In opening remarks, Leaphart said that the Commission "is probably the most legally complex board that the County operates. ... The County Council, Board of Public Utilities, and Planning & Zoning: those are the three most powerful, influential, and consequential boards the County has. It's a tall order to ask a bunch of volunteer citizens in their spare time to come in and act as judicial officers." Leaphart said, "We want to make sure that the P&Z Commission gets things right the first time because, if things go to the court, ... it doesn't benefit anyone, and it slows down projects for a long time. People's rights are uncertain, they still don't know whether they're going to be able to move forward with something or not." Leaphart commented on the recently appealed P&Z decision, "I don't think the County really had any P&Z decisions reviewed in anyone's memory here until the one on the daycare proceeding. ... It failed primarily because of a failure to meet certain legal criteria and how you write your orders and make findings of fact and conclusions of law, which are a legal requirement for this board."

Recusal and obligation to vote

Leaphart reminded the Commission of the importance of recusal and that any potential or perceived conflicts of interest must be divulged at the beginning of the hearing, even if the

member is uncertain whether it would be appropriate to recuse. If a member decides to recuse himself, then he or she cannot participate in the hearing and must leave the room to avoid influencing the decision. Every commissioner present at the hearing has the obligation to vote on the decision when called upon, without abstention or passing. "Part of the duty of being a judge," said Leaphart, "is having difficult decisions to make and making the call anyway. You've opted in to hearing the case, so you've got to call it a ball or a strike, no matter whether you're sure or unsure of what it is."

Burden of proof lies with applicant

The burden of proof in a case rests with the applicant. If a commissioner feels unable to reach a decision after hearing all the evidence, said Powers, "unfortunately, you are put in the position of being a judge of that evidence and that testimony and credibility of the witnesses that have been providing to you. If you cannot say 'all right, I agree with the applicant' with some measure of confidence, then you shouldn't vote for the application."

Judging credibility of witnesses

In a quasi-judicial hearing, Leaphart said the commissioners must judge the truth of the facts as presented. "You have to cast judgment on people to some degree. In trials in court and everywhere else, credibility is a fact to be determined," he said.

Judging subjective criteria

Powers spoke about the difficulty of judging evidence when the criteria are subjective, such as whether the proposed project is going to be detrimental or harmful to public health, safety, and welfare. This determination is made based on the 'reasonable man' standard. It is an evidentiary standard that is essentially subjective. It is each person's opinion about what a 'reasonable man' is. That's what jurors are; you're fair and impartial, you're neutral, you're not influenced, you're not biased, you're going to apply the law and facts to the case, you're reasonable." Powers added, "It's up to

you as a commission, you're the 'reasonable person' in this context. You are the judge that says, 'Okay, when I look at the witnesses and the testimony and the evidence, whether it's written or verbal, who do I believe more? Did they convince my mind?'"

Deliberating in closed session

Much discussion centered on how the commission deliberates on a case, and instances in which deliberations should be conducted in closed session. Leaphart noted that, although a legislative or policy-setting body like the County Council is required to hold its deliberations in the public eye, quasi-judicial bodies are not required to do so. Deliberations behind closed doors are in the common law tradition. Leaphart said, "The judge retreats into his chambers, the jury retreats into a jury room. That's how deliberations are done, where you get honest and get real with people, about what you just heard and experienced. And then your decision is public, your decision is very public, because you have to come up and explain it in a written order."

Several commissioners expressed discomfort about going into closed session. Commissioner Nakhleh said, "My question is that juries have to deliberate privately. ... [But] the pressure on the Commission to remain open is very high. It's considered sneaky if you go into closed session." Leaphart acknowledged the reluctance and emphasized that his office could only provide legal advice, that no one could force the commission to deliberate in closed sessions, and that the commission had to vote to do so. "We strongly advise [that] the deliberative process is absolutely vital for ensuring people's due process rights are met." Furthermore, both attorneys emphasized that candid and complete legal advice cannot be provided in an open meeting because legal advice between lawyers and their clients is confidential and privileged.

Transparency.

When asked if closed sessions for the P&Z would constitute a move away from transparency, Leaphart responded, "I think it's

a false dilemma between transparency and closed sessions. ... If you look at the Open Meetings Act, it starts off, 'In recognition of the fact that a representative government is dependent upon an informed electorate, it is declared to be public policy of this state that all persons are entitled to the greatest possible information regarding the affairs of government and the official acts of those officers and employees who represent them.' ... Now, with that, recognizing that as the governing principle, they make specific exceptions for that. That is a recognition in the law that some things are so important they must be conducted outside the public view. One of those things is deliberations of a public body in connection with the administration of adjudicatory proceedings...."

Contents of the order

Leaphart summarized the required contents of a reviewable order: the review criteria, whether the criteria were met, and, most importantly, "you have to cite the evidence in the record that you relied upon, even if you're judging public health and safety." Leaphart continued, "Even when you're citing things that appear to be subjective, you have to state your reasons for them, and those reasons must be founded in some evidence that's been presented to you, ... not just your own belief about things."

Leaphart also noted that "the order is the board's opinion, and the board's opinion is what a majority of you approved in a quorum or whatever. ... The minority opinion shouldn't be in there, in that sort of ruling."

Mechanism for writing the order

How the order is written was another topic engendering much discussion. Generally, the commission has made its final official decision at the end of the hearing and then authorizes the chair to write, sign, and file the final order, without the written order returning to the commission for formal approval. Leaphart advised having the board vote on the order to clarify that this is the board's opinion.

June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin

Observer Corps Reports – Planning and Zoning Commission – June 22

The Los Alamos Planning & Zoning (P&Z) Commission meeting on June 22, 2022, was held in-person and was attended by Commission Chair Adler, Vice Chair Martin, and Commissioners Hill, Nakhleh, Neal-Clinton, and Roberson. The meeting was a public hearing for a proposed housing development on North Mesa. Our observer report is based upon discussion during the hearing and documentation in the agenda packet, which included the application for a planned development and the County's staff report evaluating that application.

P&Z Commission approval of housing development on North Mesa

The Commission unanimously approved the preliminary Subdivision Plat submitted by Greg Gonzales (dba Columbus Capital) for a planned development consisting of 85 single family lots on San Ildefonso Road. Approval was subject to conditions specified in the County's staff report. The Commission's 'green light' for this project gives the Applicant approval to go forward to prepare the final plat, which will return to the Commission for review and approval at a future meeting.

Overview of the proposed housing development

Mr. Gonzales summarized the main features of the proposed housing development on the 17.1-acre site zoned Planned Development Residential District (PD-5). The south edge of the site sits on the edge of Pueblo Canyon and is bordered by the Broadview neighborhood to the east, the Mesa del Norte Apartment complex on the opposite side of San Ildefonso Road to the north, and undeveloped County Open Space (zoned Public Land PL) to the west. The development would offer a variety of housing options. A Homeowners' Association is required because

some development amenities would not be under purview of the County, including open space and maintenance of two underground ponds for stormwater runoff. The plan includes 1.2 acres of open space in the form of a landscaped drainage easement, small areas scattered throughout the community, and access to county open space to the west. Gonzales noted that the name of the proposed neighborhood, Arbolada, roughly translates to “tree farm,” which acknowledges a previous landowner who used to grow trees there.

Senior Planner Sobia Sayeda led the Commission through the staff report, which evaluated whether and how the Applicant met each of the eight subdivision review criteria in the County’s Development Code (Chapter 16). The Departmental review concluded that the Applicant had met the criteria. However, the Department also specified several conditions of approval based on comments from the County’s Interdepartmental Review Committee (IDRC) during its review of the plan.

Commissioner questions and comments

Commissioner Hill asked, given the County’s net-zero goal for carbon emissions, “why are we even doing new developments with gas? From experience and different developments you’ve done, would it be possible to do this without natural gas?” Gonzales replied that potential buyers generally have not made that an important requirement, but the builders are most familiar with gas so using it facilitates the construction of new housing. He continued, “I think that getting to that level of ‘green building’ is still a ways away.”

Commissioner Roberson, noting the County’s need for affordable housing, asked about the expected prices of housing in the proposed development. Gonzales replied that he cannot provide estimates because of economic uncertainty; “we don’t even know the price of gas tomorrow.” He continued that, with the proposed housing mix, “I think this is going to be one of the more economical subdivisions.”

Commissioner Martin asked whether fiber-based internet connectivity has been integrated into the plans for the proposed development, since this was a County goal. Gonzales answered, “We haven’t formally made accommodations for that. But currently, CenturyLink (which is now Lumen), in all the subdivisions we’ve done with them in the past five years, they are automatically putting fiber in all the homes. ... I’ll go out on a limb here and say that we will work with the communications provider to make sure that fiber is brought into the subdivision. ... I would have to throw one qualification in, that is if fiber is existent in the community of Los Alamos.” Powers reminded the Commission that fiber-based internet connectivity is not a requirement for this subdivision because it is not in the Development Code.

Commissioner Martin asked about the provision of parks for this site. Gonzales replied that, although the preliminary plat does not include a formal central park, he thought the small areas of open space scattered throughout the subdivision would be a more effective means of ‘activating’ the community to walk around the neighborhood. Installation of park benches in these areas are part of the plan, as well as a small area for a lookout over the canyon. He and the Commissioners also noted the nearby presence of baseball and soccer fields, tennis courts, and playlots across the street.

June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin

June's Lunch with a Leader: Rising to Our Climate Challenge

Claudia Borchert, the Climate Change Policy Coordinator for the NM Environment Department (ED), began her talk with a summary of the 2022 report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Policy, which concluded that the planet must act within the next 12 years to limit the increase in the global average temperature to 1.5°C if we are to impede major changes in the climate.

Governor Lujan Grisham initiated efforts to address the threat of climate change with publication of Executive Order 2019-003 calling for the state to join the US Climate Alliance; achieve emission reductions of at least 45% below 2005 levels by 2030; creating the Climate Change Task Force; and listing specific policy initiatives.

As a direct result of the order, the ED created the interagency Task Force to commission studies and create partnerships. Climate Action Teams work under the umbrella of the Task Force on mitigation strategies as well as adaptation and resilience. Mitigation, Borchert's focus, is the effort to reduce greenhouse gas levels. Adaptation and resilience refers to the ability to rebound and thrive despite climate change.

The 2018 NM Greenhouse Gas Study indicated that 53% of the emissions in the state come from the production of oil and gas. Borchert noted that in Los Alamos most emissions come from transportation. Current policies will reduce emissions in the state to the 2005 level. Those policies include the Energy Transition Act, the Natural Gas Waste Reduction Rule, and the Ozone Precursor Rule. Borchert displayed a slide with hyperlinks to the achievements since 2019, suggesting they could provide "good reading material for when you have trouble sleeping." She noted that one achievement was the

recent adoption of the Clean Car Rule, for which Felicia Orth, LWVLA's First Vice-President, was the hearing examiner.

More action is needed to reach the goal of 45% below the 2005 level. Borchert said that we need all of us working collectively to succeed. Community stakeholders have been convened and are working on a climate action plan. The ED and the Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department are working to implement the rules that have been adopted. Further efforts are underway to reduce transportation emissions, including support for clean fuel standard legislation and finding an alternative to the gas tax to fund roadwork.

Having failed to pass a hydrogen hub bill during the 2022 Legislative Session, the Governor signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Colorado, Utah and Wyoming and announced that the four states will compete jointly for some of the funding allocated in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act passed last year. In Executive Order 2022-13, Lujan Grisham ordered the state agencies to work to promote development of hydrogen. Borchert reassured concerned League members that each project will be evaluated and only clean hydrogen projects will be approved. She said that hydrogen can't be cut off as an option.

The video recording of the talk is available at <https://my.lwv.org/new-mexico/los-alamos/article/watch-video-lunch-leader-2022-06-16-claudia-borchert-climate-change-policy-coordinator-nmed..>

Barbara Calef

LWVLA Sends Three Delegates to the LWVUS Convention

First Vice-President Felicia Orth drove Treasurer Rosmarie Frederickson, and me to Denver on June 26 for the 55th LWVUS Convention. The convention was virtual in 2020. This year it was hybrid, so delegates could participate from home if they preferred. All of the meetings were recorded and the recordings are available at <https://convention.lwv.org/agenda> .

Registration was different this year. In the past delegates received two printed volumes with all the information for the convention, including proposed bylaws amendments, budget, program, resolutions, as well as the rules and agendas for the plenary sessions, a list of caucuses and workshops, and other scheduled events. This time we downloaded an app on our cell phones with much of the information. The app was also required for voting during the plenary sessions. Technical help was available, but, while the change saved large quantities of paper, important details were difficult to locate and to read. It would have been helpful if pdfs had been emailed to the delegates. As Rosmarie wrote, “I found my old cell phone not able to load pages fast enough to deal with the two-minute voting time. I spent time running to the help center. Instead of concentrating on thinking about how to vote on a particular issue, I was concentrating on being able to vote. I must confess that I am still addicted to paper copies of things – especially the agenda and controversial positions and amendments.”

Our first formal event was the Women Power Democracy panel, moderated by LWVUS board member Allison Riggs. The speakers were April Albright of Black Voters Matter, Noelle Damico of The Workers Circle, Nicole Melaku of National Partnership for New Americans, and Christian Nunes of the National Organization for Women. The panelists provided much-needed inspiration at a time when the news each day is so grim. Rosmarie said, “With an increase in Voter suppression laws and erosion of trust in a fair election, this was a very timely address. With over 200 new election-limiting laws proposed in various states, it helped each of us understand the importance of staying aware of these issues. “

Caucuses and workshops

Barbara's report:

I attended the workshop on Building Civic Capacity in a Time of Disinformation and Disruption. The speaker was Matt Leighninger, the head of Democracy Innovation. He started by noting that our society has changed in recent years. People are more educated, but have less time to spare, different attitudes toward authority, and are better able to find resources, allies, and information. He proceeded to discuss ways to engage. His book, *The Next Form of Democracy*, 2006, suggests



Figure 1 - Line dancing at the convention. Rosmarie Frederickson second from right, Felicia Orth fourth from right. Photo by Barbara Calef

more meaningful forms of public involvement in view of the changes in our society. Another publication, *Taking the Conversation Virtual*, available online, suggests ways to moderate virtual forums.

The group was directed to talk to each other about how to engage members of our communities. My seat-mate told me her League had successfully used speed-dating as a model for an alternative to candidate forums. Another delegate recounted her League's success in engaging high school students by speaking in journalism classes about how to observe public meetings. The one-hour meeting ended too soon!

Felicia and I signed up for a tour of the Denver County Clerk's office. Outside the entrance is a drop box. We learned from our guide that there are 42 such boxes in the county and more than 500,000 registered voters. In Colorado ballots are automatically mailed to all registered voters, but vote centers are also available beginning 15 days before an election. Since the transition to all mailed ballots and vote centers, the state-wide cost per voter has dropped 40%.

Felicia said that she found "the journey of the ballot" inspiring. Unlike some states in which it seems they sideline a ballot if the voter doesn't fill it out exactly according to instructions, in Denver a team of humans (not more than one from a party) sits together to come to agreement on the voter's intention. (That is how it is done in Los Alamos, too.)

They weigh the metal boxes into which ballots are deposited before opening them, and can tell exactly how many ballots are inside by weight before breaking the seals. (In NM we count the ballots instead.)

Other differences between elections in Colorado and New Mexico:

- Unaffiliated voters receive both the Republican and the Democratic ballot in the primary; they can return one.
- Voters must pay to mail their ballots, but they are processed even if the postage is insufficient.
- Signatures are checked. As Felicia wrote, "Signatures are checked first by a machine; if the machine flags a signature for further review, a human reviews it, having been trained in handwriting analysis to recognize the difference between those changes that occur naturally over the years and those changes that indicate potential fraud. If there are still questions, the office reaches out to the voter for confirmation, which can be provided via text. Only if all of those efforts to verify fail is a referral made for potential prosecution. An unexplained discrepancy is sent to the Attorney General's office."



Figure 2 - Automated Signature Verification Machines in the County Clerk's Office. Photo by Felicia Orth.

Rosmarie's report:

I attended a caucus on "Achieving Digital Equity." This was one of the concurrences we would later vote on. The panel encouraged us to think about the fact that digital equity is a prerequisite for education, health, and civic engagement. It is an Equity and Inclusion issue, so we need to have a

position to lobby our state for these principles. Even here in Los Alamos we are discussing how best to provide broadband coverage to all homes.

The next caucus I attended was “Cybersecurity and Privacy in our Democracy?” Election Security is vulnerable to interference from all kinds of sources. As we have heard in the news, there were certain issues in the 2020 election that could be construed as election interference from Russia and irregularities in local votes. The ability to be able to have access to the source code used in proprietary machines might help to make us more comfortable about the security of these machines. Unfortunately, the presenter had very few solutions to these issues; they did not really eliminate the risk of voting online.

I also attended “Advocating for Ranked Choice Voting in Municipal Elections.” Since two municipalities in New Mexico already use this way to vote, I was happy to learn more. Since I was already thinking about voting systems, I chose to attend “Colorado’s Innovative and Stellar Election System.” It discussed the current Mail Ballot system. It was very detailed, and I was very impressed with the care and diligence of all the parts presented. They covered the mailing of ballots, processing the returned ballots, post-election audits, the security of drop boxes. There certainly was very little room for fraud.

Felicia’s report:

I attended a workshop on fundraising in which Adam Ambrogi from the national office shared ways to find potential partners and funders for support of state and local leagues, especially for special projects. He discussed both fundraising and “friend-raising” to build reputation, and maintaining relationships with donors, important for state and local leagues without development staff. I suggested to him afterward that it seemed the attendees were most interested in how to make a pitch, beyond how to find potential donors, and that he next offer “ambassador training” for those who could benefit from it.

The workshop on Best Practices in Digital Media offered excellent and very practical tips for creating and promoting content across email, Facebook, Tiktok, Twitter, and Instagram. The speaker had lots of examples of compelling messages and calls to action, and shared links to many available resources.



Figure 3 - Protest at the Capitol. Photo by Felicia Orth

At the commencement of the first plenary session, LWVUS President Dr. Deborah Turner reported that the US Supreme Court had just issued their decision to reverse *Roe v Wade*. She announced that we are ready to fight and would march that afternoon to express our anger with the court’s action. She also announced that the League’s goal for the next 100 years would be to abolish the Electoral College through an amendment to US Constitution.

Rosmarie wrote, “At 4pm most of the 500 attendees joined a march to the Colorado Capitol Building to protest this decision. I was happy to be able to show my disappointment

in this way. I feel it is stripping us all of a right we have had for 50 years. Unfortunately, there are more civil rights in danger of being changed.”

Felicia said that she was impressed by the amount of security. “I always saw at least three guards in the vicinity, and I was impressed that the League sent that security with us to the rally at the Capitol for reproductive rights. Being in a large city for that event was a different experience than being at Ashley Pond or at the Capitol in Santa Fe—we were surrounded by a much more diverse, young, and colorful population!”

On Saturday, due to an overlong celebration of the League, the convention business was rushed and inadequate even though the time for the session was extended repeatedly. The budget was quickly passed. Bylaws were next on the agenda. Rosmarie wrote of the first bylaws amendment: “It says that in 2024 new members will join at all League levels simultaneously. Per-member payments will be eliminated, and income will be shared between LWWUS and state and local Leagues with LWWUS getting no more than 1/3 of the receipts. A sliding scale for dues will be suggested, but each member will pay what they feel they can. LWWUS will collect dues, distributing the funds collected, and they will maintain the membership roster. I voted against this amendment. I think building a budget and knowing how much money is required to do our local work is very important... To have all the money collected by LWWUS takes some of our freedom away to deal with local problems. We used to have an Education Fund held by LWWUS. To get any reimbursement from that fund was a lengthy and frustrating effort. I fear more of the same to come.”

In the past a banquet had always been scheduled for Saturday night. This year we were told that instead there would be an in-person reception to give the delegates an opportunity to mingle with members from other regions. We arrived late, but found there was plentiful food and drink and dancing! It was very informal and enjoyable to be able to relax after the long plenary.

On Sunday, at the final meeting, the first item on the revised agenda was consideration of a not-recommended amendment from the Wisconsin League to drop the age requirement for voting membership, currently 16. It failed.

The delegates approved re-adopting all of the current national League positions. Also passed were concurrence with Connecticut’s position on Digital Equity, New York’s Health Care Update, and California’s Criminal Justice position. The program proposal for continuing Making Democracy Work was expanded by the delegates with an explicit reference to the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and the addition of “the election of the president by popular vote.”

The delegates also approved four resolutions on:

- Immigration Reform
- Climate Emergency Declarations at local and state levels
- Statehood for the District of Columbia
- Support for increased attention to the problem of murdered and missing Indigenous People
- A fifth recommended resolution, on Reproductive Rights, was passed (out of agenda order) in the first Plenary session on Friday.

This was the sixth national convention I attended. I was very pleased to observe that the body of delegates was far more diverse in age and ethnicity than at any time in the past 20 years.

Barbara Calef, Felicia Orth, and Rosmarie Frederickson

News Release:

LWVNM Responds to the June 24 SCOTUS Roe v. Wade Ruling

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico is deeply grateful to the 2021 New Mexico State Legislature and the Governor for the passage of the Repeal Abortion Ban Act. With this protection in place, we will continue to exercise our constitutional rights and make our own decisions about reproductive healthcare. It took foresight to pass this legislation and the League is thankful for New Mexico's leadership on this issue.

We call upon our policymakers to take further action ensuring the health, safety and freedom of all New Mexicans in light of the SCOTUS decision overturning Roe v. Wade.

The League of Women Voters of the United States President Dr. Deborah Turner and CEO Virginia Kase Solomón said in a joint statement that this ruling "will have devastating — and immediate — consequences across the country."

Without the power to make our own decisions about our bodies, we become second class citizens.

LWVLA Board of Directors 2022-2023

Officers:

- Co-president: Barbara Calef
- Co-president: Rebecca Shankland
- 1st Vice-President: Felicia Orth
- 2nd Vice-President: Ellen Mills
- Secretary: Rebecca Chaiken
- Treasurer: Rosmarie Frederickson

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- Lunch with a Leader: Karyl Ann Armbruster
- Publicity: Jody Benson
- Voter Services: Lynn Jones
- Newsletter Editor: Robert Williams
- Director at Large: Addie Jacobson
- Director at Large: Akkana Peck

Off-board Directors:

- Arrangements: Wendy Swanson
- County Council and P&Z Observers: June Fabryka-Martin and Craig Martin
- Membership: Jean Dewart & Dotty Reilly
- Nominations: Ellen Mills & Leslie Wallstrom
- Website and Facebook: Madhavi Garimella & Helena Whyte
- Video Editor: Eduardo Santiago



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 Newsletter Update as an electronic file, saving postage and paper.

_____ **OR** Check here if you prefer to have a hard copy of the newsletter mailed to you.

_____ 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-deduction statement.

_____ Single membership: \$45.

_____ Household membership (two or more people at the same address): \$70.

_____ Single Sustaining membership: \$75.

_____ Household Sustaining membership (two or more 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 area of interest: _____

Ways to Help with League Activities

- _____ Voter Registration
- _____ Organize/provide refreshments at forums
- _____ Observer Corps: Council, DPU, P&Z, etc.
- _____ Write newsletter articles
- _____ Assist in developing the Voter Guide (editing, developing questions, data entry, etc.)
- _____ Assist with Lunch with a Leader
- _____ Website/Social Media – Technical assistance and content development
- _____ Advocate for League positions – Communicate with local, state, and federal leaders
- _____ Serve on LWV-Los Alamos Board (we need a Treasurer and a Lead for the Voter Guide)
- _____ Other ideas? (See the *March, 2022 Update* for details.)

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