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The Voter

League of Women Voters of
Central New Mexico
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LWVCNM homepage: <http://www.lwvcnm.org>

Rick Miera to Speak about Education at January Luncheon Unit

Rick Miera, the longest serving chair of the New Mexico House of Representatives Education Committee and former House majority leader, will be the speaker at the Jan. 8 League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico luncheon meeting. The meeting will be at 11:45 at the Elegante Hotel (Menaul and University).

Miera represented District 11 and was first

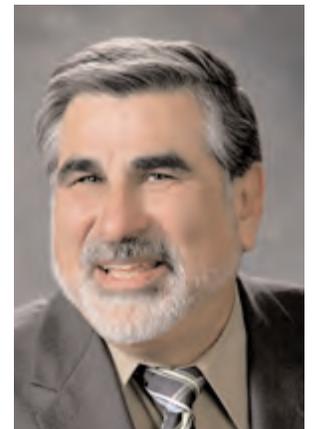
elected to the chamber in 1990. He did not seek re-election in 2014.

At the luncheon he will address such topics as how much will education change in the future.

Education is an important issue for the League. It can help people get out of poverty and be more successful economically. It can also stimulate economic development since all companies want an educated workforce.

However, education is facing a lot of issues such as testing, class size, the common core and other reforms. Many solutions are proposed based on ideology and "what everybody knows" -- not actual research and data. It is not a question of whether education will change this session, but how much and how

(Continued on page 3)



Rick Miera

Money in Politics LWVUS Study

By Andrea Targhetta

During the 2014 LWVUS Convention in Dallas, Tex. a study on Money in Politics (MIP) was adopted. This national study is part of the Structures of Democracy program that delegates adopted.

The three parts of this program are: 1) the process of amending the U.S. Constitution; 2) a review and update of the League position on campaign finance; and 3) a review of the redistricting process for the U.S. Congress.

Many members nationwide applied for a position on the 2014-2016 LWVUS Money in Politics (MIP) Committee, and those positions were filled a few weeks ago after a full vetting process of resumes and references.

The nine committee members are from Leagues all over the U.S. LWVCNM member Jeanne Logsdon has been selected to be a MIP committee member. This team will be chaired by LWVUS Director Barbara Zia with Senior

(Continued on page 4)

January Calendar

Jan. 5	Voter deadline
Jan. 8	Board meeting, 5:30 p.m.
Jan. 8	Luncheon Unit, 11.45 a.m.
Jan. 13	Evening Unit, 5:30 p.m.
Jan. 21	Westside Unit, 5 p.m.
Jan. 20	Opening day of Legislature, noon
Jan. 26	Northeast Heights Unit, 10 a.m.

**League of Women Voters of
Central New Mexico
Board Meeting**

**1st Thursday of each month
Offices of Satin, Thayer & Browne,
6565 Americas Parkway NE**

Program Committees

Mental Health Study

Jan Bray & Shelly Shepherd

All League members are invited to all unit meetings, committee and board meetings.

The *Voter* is published on partially-recycled paper each month by the League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico. It is also distributed via email and can be accessed online at our website www.lwvcnm.org.

**Help Needed to Conduct
Union Election**

The League has agreed to conduct a small election of early education center employees on Jan. 22 for the New Mexico Early Educators United. We will be responsible for some preliminary work, such as mailings and notices as well as day of election site management handling ballots, counting them and certifying results.

They expect only 30 voters but we will probably schedule the vote from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Jan. 22 at a central location TBA. We will need three four-hour shifts of two to three volunteers.

Please consider volunteering. We won't make a great deal of money, but every little bit helps. If you are interested in getting even more involved in learning how we do these elections, I would definitely appreciate including you in the preparations. To volunteer for the Election Day or for even more please let me know at joporter@nmia.com.

-- *Josephine Porter*

President's Corner

By Andrea Targhetta

HAPPY NEW YEAR! This year is beginning as usual with our New Mexico Legislature opening a sixty-day session in Santa Fe on Jan. 20. Key dates are:

Dec. 15, 2014 -- Jan. 16 -- Legislation may be pre-filed

Jan. 20 -- Opening day (noon)

Feb. 19 -- Deadline for introduction

March 21-- Session ends (noon)

There will be many new bills and some redrafted old ones carried to the floor. Go to the NM Legislature's website, www.nmlegis.gov/lcs. There you will find a link to the committees and the legislators who have been assigned to them. You can register for a bill tracking service to follow the bills as they make their way to the floor with "My Roundhouse" and locate a bill using a variety of keywords with "Bill Finder." Agendas for all committees will be posted. Our LWVNM Action Committee will send out up-to-date information during the entire session. So be sure and sign up at lwwnmaction-subscribe@yahoogroups.com for these emails.

With the link "Other Resources" you will find on the Legislative Social Calendar for Feb. 9, the LWVNM Legislative Reception at Garretts' Desert Inn from 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. (Invitation Only), and you all are invited. If you plan on attending the next day, Feb. 10, for League Day at the Legislature, please call Garretts' Desert Inn (505-982-1851) and make reservations using the code "swing vote."

If you cannot get to Santa Fe, take advantage of the webcasting of the House and Senate floors and the committee meetings. Participate in the process, even if it is only keeping up with the developments online. Be on the lookout for bills concerning voter ID, drivers' licenses, food tax, education, photo ID, easing of regulations on our natural resources and ethics.

The Action Committee will be sending out a list of legislative priorities. Call or email your senators and representatives as you see bills in which the League has an interest. Call the legislative switchboard (505) 986-4300 and ask for your representative. A personal call or an email respectfully stating your views is most welcome. Believe it or not, our legislators appreciate citizen input and participation. As a matter of fact, our legislators value a personal visit to Santa Fe to speak with them about our concerns and our viewpoints on any issue which is important to us. Find them in their office or even on the floor during session breaks. We are so fortunate to have New Mexico as one of the most accessible legislatures in the country.

January Units

(Continued from page 1)

will it change.

The meeting will be held at 11:45 a.m. at the MCM Elegante Hotel, 2020 Menaul N.E. Reservations for the lunch must be made by 10 a.m. on Jan. 5. The cost of lunch is \$17 for members and \$20 for non-members. To make a reservation call the LWVCNM office at 884-8441 or email lunch@lwvcnm.org. Indicate if you want an alternate menu option.

Evening Unit --Tuesday Jan. 13 at 5:30 at the Cherry Hills Library (Harper and Barstow).

Dick Mason, the LWVNM state action chair, will provide a preview of the upcoming legislative session. He will discuss what to expect from the new legislature and the party change in the House and what issues the League will be tracking this session and likely outcomes.

Northeast Heights Unit-- Monday, Jan. 26 at 10 a.m. at La Vida Llana, 10501 Lagrima de Oro NE.

Gerhard Salinger will provide an overview

of the National Science Foundation's Role in Improving Education. Salinger is a former program director in the Discovery Research K-12 program in the Division of Research on Learning in Formal and Informal Settings in the NSF's Directorate for Education and Human Resources

The NSF plays a major role in funding and coordinating scientific research that leads to discoveries that may improve productivity and lead to a higher quality of life. However, many people are unaware of its significant role in improving education at all levels -- not just at the university level.

Salinger has a Ph.D. in physics and before joining the NSF, he was chair of the physics department at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Westside Unit -- Wednesday, Jan 21 at 5 p.m. at the Rio Rancho, Loma Colorado Branch Library

The topic of the meeting will be the upcoming Legislative Session.

Voter Services Report

The last Naturalization Ceremony for the year was held on Dec. 5 at the Albuquerque Convention Center East Wing from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. There were 200 applicants from 44 countries. JoAnna Zipperian and Pam Harris were there to hand out voter registration application forms to the new citizens.

There is change of date for the Albuquerque Public Schools Board candidate forum for Districts 1, 2, and 4 (discussed in the July and August Voter Services Reports). The new date will be Tuesday, Jan. 20. Jo Porter will be moderator and Cheryl Haaker will be timekeeper. The forum will be held at the Albuquerque Public Schools Administration Building, 6400 Uptown Blvd. from 6 to 8 p.m.

The candidates running for the districts are District 1: Madelyn A. Jones, Colt M. Balok, Analee N. Maestas (incumbent); District 2: Kathy Korte (incumbent), Peggy L. Muller-Aragón; District 4: Sina-Aurelia Pleasant-Soul Bowe, John J. Lopez, James M. Osborn, Charles E. MacQuigg, Mark J. Gilboard, Barbara E. Petersen

We welcome all interested persons to come ask questions of these candidates. -- Pam Harris

Membership Leadership Development Program

Imagine if

League of Women Voters CNM was growing in membership and funding.

It is growing!

We currently have 200 plus members. How can we be successful in growing our organization?

1. Conduct regular and intentional outreach to potential League members.
2. Connect with and become visible in the community.
3. ASK potential members to join the League.
4. Attend neighborhood functions and distribute LWVCNM information

-- Marilyn Fifield

Is Dark Money Dimming the Light of Democracy?

By Karen Wentworth

Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of New Mexico Mike Rocca says there are troubling changes in the political campaigns that are being financed with dark money.

The 2014 general election may not have been the most expensive election in U.S. history, even though experts expect it to total more than \$4 billion in money raised and spent. But it may win for the amount of dark money that flowed through the races. Dark money is money collected by 501(c) organizations. There is no federal or state requirement that it be tabulated or reported by anyone, anywhere. It is money spent on behalf of a candidate by someone somewhere who probably now wants something from that candidate. New Mexico is one of six states that does not require disclosure about money collected and spent by 501(c) organizations.

Rocca says, "If this dark money continues, we are going to have less transparency and less accountability. We will be literally unable to hold our members of Congress and our legislators accountable. And this strikes at the heart of democracy. We've got to figure this out."

In theory, the super PACs and 501(c) organizations collect and spend money on elections to discuss issues without any consultation or input from the candidate. 501(c) is an Internal Revenue Service designation for non-profits and educational organizations.

Rocca says campaign reporting laws have allowed this kind of loophole for years, but it has only been recently exploited. Now the floodgates for dark money have opened. It's very hard to track exactly who is spending money on what candidates nationally, but it is clear more money is being spent by outside groups than ever before. An article in the *New York Times* calculates outside groups supporting Republicans raised and spent about \$205 million in television advertising, while Democratic supporters may have spent about \$132 million.

"What is interesting," Rocca says, "is who is giving. The top one percent of individual donors gives Super PACs 47 percent of the money they spend. It is not organizations. It is not corporations. It is individuals." For 501(c) groups it is even less clear who is giving. "We have no idea what is going on

with 501(c) groups because they are not required by the IRS to disclose. And those donations are coming in unlimited numbers," he says.

The money is used to support allies. "Money is not buying votes. Money is being given to allies. If I am giving money to an ally in Congress, you are already on the same page. I am giving it to you because you are on the same page as me. It's not getting votes. It's being given because of the votes." Rocca says. "By far the most important reason that groups give money at all is to keep allies in office. You are hoping for something in return of course, maybe an earmark, but that person is no good to you outside of office. Money keeps your allies in office." And the money is fundamental to campaigns. Rocca says anyone who wants to challenge a member of Congress in 2016 had better have at least \$1.5 million to do it with. Candidates who want to challenge an incumbent senator need to think about raising \$11 million. The money those incumbents receive from their allies makes the difference. More than 90 percent of incumbents are reelected.

Rocca, who says he rarely gives opinions in classes, is more than ready to share an opinion on dark money. "We've got to know where the money is coming from. This 501(c) issue strikes at the heart of our democracy. So we've got outside interests giving money, spending money on behalf of a candidate, and you have the office holder giving some sort of service to that outside interest, but we've got to see those contributions. That's the point. That's what is at stake here."

Money in Politics

(Continued from page 1)

Lobbyist Betsy Lawson providing staff support.

The committee's scope of work is to "review and update League positions on campaign finance and to enhance member and citizen understanding of the new schemes and structures used to influence elections and erode protections against corruption in our political process."

Book Review: *The Squandering of America*

Editor's Note: Book Review -- This review of an important public policy book is a regular feature in the Voter. by Olin Bray, author of ebook, *Political Incompetence: What's Wrong With Our System and How To Fix It.*

The Squandering of America: How the Failure of Our Politics Undermines Our Prosperity by Robert Kuttner, 2007, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, hardcover, 337 pages.

This 2007 book is interesting because it makes many of the same points as Thomas Piketty does in his book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, which was reviewed in earlier *Voters*. In fact, he quotes some of Piketty's earlier research but did it almost a decade ago. However, Kuttner's focus is on the politics that caused or accentuated the problem. He says that the Republicans have always been pro-business, although Teddy Roosevelt's trust-busting is an exception. By the 1980s the Democrats had shifted from a populist to a more pro-business centrist position. This led to politicians, in both parties, systematically dismantling the New Deal and Great Society institutions that addressed inequality in income and wealth and tried to mitigate its effects.

The consequence was a shifting of risks from organizations (corporations and governments) to individuals and an increase in systemic risks to the economy. Economic problems of concern to most Americans were ignored and allowed to become more serious.

Between 2000 and 2006 productivity increased by 19 percent, while the median income (half above and half below) adjusted for inflation fell 5.4 percent for all working age families despite a GDP growth of 18 percent. On average only 3.4 percent of the workforce with advanced degrees had an increase in their earnings. Obviously, education alone is not the answer.

Company sponsored defined benefit pensions, which put the economic risk on companies rather than individuals, and health insurance plans were artifacts of WWII. Limited by the wage and price freeze, companies used these benefits to attract workers. Both are rapidly disappearing. Similarly New Deal and Great Society programs,

such as social security, unemployment compensation, the GI Bill, FHA, and Medicare are being cut back or threatened. The only comparable addition in the last 50 years was the Medicare drug benefit. Even Eisenhower's work on education and infrastructure (the interstate highway system) had to be called national defense programs to pass.

Kuttner contends that progressive policies required to address our economic problems require broad-based political mobilization organizations that are rapidly disappearing with the decline in the labor movement, the increase in working hours and in two income households, and the impact of major contributors in politics. Around 1900 there were at least 25 mass membership organizations each with one percent of the population. The members controlled these organizations through state and local organizations and elected delegates to their national conventions. Today there are very few of these organizations and many of the ones that are left have become what he calls letterhead organizations controlled by a director and a paid staff rather than members. These organizations provide a training ground for people to learn how to operate effectively in democratic organizations and society. Furthermore, most of these organizations were progressive and focused on economic issues important to their members.

Kuttner suggests that the problem is not that politics has become too ideological, but rather that there is only one ideology, with both parties becoming too pro-business. The Democrats, he believes, need to become more populist and focus on economic issues that concern most Americans. He says that most liberals today are primarily social liberals focusing on issues that are not as important to most people as the basic economic issues.

Obviously, some things have changed since the book was written. Congress has become more polarized and less willing to compromise. A populist economic ideology is still not being voiced as an alternative to the strong pro-business one that gets all of the attention. Perhaps the most discouraging thing is that while many of the economic problems were identified a decade or more ago so little has happened that this book could have been written this year.

Laura Stokes Proposes League Study on Public Banking

Dear League Members,

I am proposing a new League study on Public Banking. In case you haven't heard, this is an idea that is catching on around the country. Several states are taking aggressive action to make this happen in their communities, whether on the city, county or state levels. Santa Fe has been in the forefront as its city council has recently approved a public bank feasibility study. Another plus is that Santa Fe's mayor, Javier Gonzales, is very supportive of this idea. New Mexico could really be put on the map in a positive light if the creation of a public bank in Santa Fe goes forward after the study is completed. There was a Public Banking Symposium held in Santa Fe in September which drew 400 people Albuquerque, including some city council members, county commission members and state legislators, is following the Santa Fe progress very closely, in the event that it too may wish to establish a public bank.

If you are interested, please get in touch with me. If you have questions before you call, I'd like to refer you to two excellent resources which contain extensive research and expertise: <http://ellenbrown.com> (Ellen has written several books and was a featured speaker at the Public Banking Symposium this fall in Santa Fe) and <http://www.publicbankinginstitute.org>, the website

of the national Public Banking Institute.

I won't attempt to educate anyone at this time on what is a Public Bank. I just know that I am really, really concerned about what Wall Street has done to this country and what it continues to do unchecked. In contrast, money deposited in a city, county, or state Public Bank could be used for such things as loans to students, to small businesses, or funding for such community programs as affordable housing. Local funds would not go to Wall Street to continue its risky practices; such risk taking may sooner or later likely bring about another financial crisis. In addition, a Public Bank, owned by the citizens and managed by professional bankers (as is true of the publically-owned Bank of North Dakota) would return its earnings to the citizens rather than to Wall Street. It could thus provide taxpayers some relief and at the same time help keep the state or local government financially sound. And the passing of this recent Cromnibus legislation should be enough to convince us that we need to find ways to give economic power back to the people.

Please call me 505 328 1767 or email me at stokescorrales@comcast.net. Let's put the League at the forefront of this new and exciting idea.

Laura Stokes

Plan on Attending LWVNM Convention May 15-17

Plan on attending the LWVNM convention May 15-17. LWVCNM is serving as hosts.

The keynote speaker for the convention banquet on May 16 will be Martha Burk, a political psychologist and women's issues expert who is co-founder of the Center for Advancement of Public Policy in Washington, D.C.

Burk serves as the Money Editor for *Ms. Magazine* and is a syndicated newspaper columnist and frequent blogger for Huffington Post. Her latest book, *Your Voice, Your Vote: The Savvy Woman's Guide to Power, Politics, and the Change We Need* (2012), is a *Ms. Magazine* book selection.

Most convention activities, except for a reception on May 15, will be held at the Crowne Plaza in Albuquerque.



Maggie Toulouse Oliver, left, Bernalillo County Clerk since January 2007, talks to a couple of LWVCNM members at the December luncheon meeting. As the keynote speaker, she provided her perspective on the election -- what parts of the process worked and what needs improving. (Photo by Brenda McKenna)