



The Voter

July 2012

League of Women Voters
of Central New Mexico
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Tony Sylvester to talk about transportation issues at July meeting

Tony Sylvester, part-time professor in the University of New Mexico's School of Architecture and Planning, will be the speaker at the July General Meeting of the League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico. The meeting will be July 12 at 11:45 a.m. at the MCM Eleganté Hotel, 2020 Menaul N.E.



Tony Sylvester

Sylvester shares his time as a Special Projects Manager with the Mid-Region Council of Governments and the Rio Metro Regional Transit District (RMRTD). He was involved with the Rail Runner project from its inception -- working on station

location analysis, station design, public involvement and service and operations design. Sylvester continues to help Rail Runner service evolve, identifying service and capital improvements central to the system's success.

Sylvester is also charged with planning RMRTD transit routes, including both current service and service designed to address the region's future transportation challenges.

With responsibilities in regional land use and transit planning and operations, Sylvester has an unique position to advance the integration of land use and transportation at both the neighborhood and regional level. His experience ranges from the development and adoption of station area land use and transportation plans to assessing regional transportation markets and developing planning and operations aspects of the regional transit system.

Sylvester is a part-time professor in the University of New Mexico's School of Architecture and Planning where he teaches graduate and undergraduate level planning classes and is on the Board of Directors for the Greater Albuquerque Housing Partnership.

Reservations for the lunch must be made by 10 a.m. on July 9. The cost of lunch is \$15. To make a reservation, please call the LWVCNM office at 884-8441 or email lunch@lwvcnm.org.

Your Voters' Guide needs you

As we get closer to the 2012 General Elections, your LWVCNM is gearing up to publish its umpteenth *Voters' Guide*. We need your help. Judith Binder will be your editor, but she needs lots of help at every step.

Volunteers are needed for many specific tasks including:

- * Be part of Questions Committee to draft the questions we ask the candidates (several meetings July)

- * A Distribution Chair to organize calling the many distribution locations and help to organize the "Distribution Day" push to bring the *Guide* to the voters. (August-October)

- * Prepare the candidate list to email out the questionnaires

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July Calendar

No July Board meeting -- vacation

July 5 Voter deadline

July 12 General Meeting, 11:45 a.m.

**League of Women Voters of
Central New Mexico
Board Meeting
1st Thursday of each month
Offices of Sutin, Thayer & Browne,
6565 Americas Parkway NE**

Program Committees

Fair Representation Committee

Cheryl Haaker (298-7415)

Drug Policy

Jan Bray

Natural Resources

Includes transportation, land use, air quality, water, and energy.

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.

Membership Committee Report

New Member

Barbara Fries

Voters' Guide

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* Proofreaders to meet at our publisher Automated Elections in Rio Rancho. (middle to late September)

* Members to call the distribution locations to confirm they will be a distribution place for our Guide. (late August-September)

* Distribution workers to deliver Voters' Guides (early October)

These are just a few of the one-time projects in which everyone can participate. Please call the League office (884-8441) and leave a message with your phone number to volunteer.

Presidents' Corner

On June 9, 2012, the *Albuquerque Journal* published an op-ed article entitled "Free -Floating PAC Money Polluting Politics," by Diane Dimond (www.dianedimond.net). Diane beat me to the punch, as I was in process of writing an article on this topic. I responded to the *Journal* with a letter to the editor in support of her comments. The letter was printed June 16.

In writing this month's *Voter* article, I realize that I am preaching to the choir about how our political system is messed up. The League of Women Voters is deeply concerned about the current state of political financing in our nation. Currently there is a flood of secret money in our election system. Unlike a real flood, though, we can't tell where the money is coming from. Corporations, unions, lobbyists and special interest groups can now spend millions to get elected those officials that they want in power, all in complete secrecy -- and yet legally.

In its ruling in *Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission*, the Supreme Court opened the floodgates for big-money special interests and our elections. One effect of the ruling is that big money can be spent in complete secrecy in unlimited amounts, which overwhelms and drowns out other voices during elections.

The Disclosure Act of 2012 is currently making its way through the U.S. Senate and has been introduced into the House of Representatives. A vote in early July is anticipated on the bill in the Senate (S. 2219). The bill has been carefully crafted to require disclosure by outside groups of large campaign contributions and expenditures (\$10,000 and above) that go to so-called "independent" spending on election advertising. It also includes a "stand by your ad" provision for ads run by outside groups and requires them to certify that their spending is not coordinated with candidates on their campaigns. Finally, it requires transparency in regard to transfers of money among groups so that the actual sources of funding being spent to influence federal elections will be known.

Fair and clean elections, determined by the votes of informed citizens, is at the center of our democracy and the League of Women Voters' mission. Please contact our two U.S. senators, Sen. Jeff Bingaman and Sen. Tom Udall and U.S. Representative Martin Heinrich to urge their support of Senate bill S. 2219.

-- Shelly Shepherd, Co-President

Variety of programs on tap for coming year



LWVCNM members decide what topics will be discussed at unit meetings during a recent Program Planning meeting. (Photo by Cheryl Haaker)

Thank you to the many League members who volunteered their time and effort to set up programs for the coming months. You are the glue that holds our league together

September

Science and Technology Education in Elementary and Secondary Schools

Person responsible: Karen Douglas

October

Campaign Finance Reform, with focus on the Citizens United Supreme Court Decision

Person responsible: Dick Mason

November

Health Care after the Supreme Court Decision on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Person responsible: Dick Mason

December

General Meeting: Plan A -- Governor Susana Martinez; Plan B -- Jeff Bingaman

Person responsible: Karen Wentworth

January

Potential for the Direction of Legislation in U.S. Congress and NM Legislature

Persons responsible: Shelly Shepherd and Olin Bray

Presenter for one meeting: Olin Bray

Presenter for Evening Unit: Dick Mason

February

Women's Issues

Presenter of Reproductive Choices: Jan Bray

Presenter on Violence against Women: Mary Smith

March

Open Government

Persons responsible: Mary Smith and Marilyn Morgan

April

Alcohol Study Consensus

Person responsible: Jan Bray

May

May 4 -- Annual Meeting

Violence Prevention; Gun Control

Possible speaker: U.S. Attorney Kenneth Gonzalez

Persons responsible: Mary Smith and Helen Wright

June

Possible speaker for June 13 general meeting: new UNM president

Person responsible: Karen Wentworth

Note: If you didn't see issues you are interested in included in the list, please let me know at kwentworth17@comcast.net. -- Karen Wentworth

Book Review: The Untapped Power of Independents

Editor's Note: Book Review -- This review of an important public policy book is a regular feature in the Voter.

That Used To Be Us: How America fell behind in the world it invented and how we can come back, by Thomas L. Friedman and Michael Mandelbaum, 2011, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, hardcover, pp 356.

The authors suggest four causes for our slow motion decline. First, after the Cold War with no immediate, clear, major enemy we lost our focus. During the Cold War we knew we had to push economic growth, technological innovation and social mobility. Second, we failed to address our biggest problems, including education, the deficit and the debt and energy and climate change, in part because we lost the ability to act collectively. Third, we stopped investing in our future. Fourth, our political system became paralyzed from excessive partisanship and a war on math and science by both parties.

Our four post-Cold War challenges are: globalization, the information technology revolution, our soaring budget deficits, and energy consumption and climate change. Unfortunately, these challenges are so big they require a collective response from both parties and from the public and private sectors. However, they are incremental and can be avoided until a major crisis, when addressing them is much more difficult and costly. To address them, everyone must realize that we are going to have to spend less, save more, and pay higher taxes.

The authors say we have ignored all five of our pillars of prosperity: public education; building and modernizing our infrastructure; keeping immigration open; government support for research and development; and necessary and intelligent regulation that addresses the externalities that the market ignores. They consider it a tragedy that many of our leaders are willing to leave their audiences in ignorance of, or even encourage stupidity about, the nature of our problems and what will be required to solve them.

Globalization and the IT revolution have changed the nature of jobs and the workforce of the future. The U.S. has focused on high-wage, high-skill jobs and scorned the low-wage, low-skill jobs

in the less developed countries. The change is that we are now seeing serious competition from high skill, low-wage workers, especially in India and China. To compete, all types of companies now want all of their workers to be able to think creatively, solve complex, non-routine tasks, and work collaboratively with others both locally and internationally.

This will require major changes in our educational system. We need more and better education. While we often talk about an internal education gap with minorities, there is also a major gap with our foreign competitors. While we often see education as a social issue, other countries approach it as a major economic development and strategic issue. Simply closing our internal gap will not solve our problem. Our competitors are graduating more and better-educated students. A third of those entering four-year colleges and 40 percent of those entering two-year colleges need at least one remedial course -- and even one remedial course is highly correlated with failure to graduate. As an example of how fast technology and jobs are changing, they point out that in the military, today's generals never had access to and used the intelligence and weapons systems their troops routinely use. This changes the nature of leadership to encouraging and supporting innovation and change rather than telling people what to do. A final point on education is that in their cohort, U.S. 55-year-olds were the most highly educated in the world, but our 25-year-olds are only in the middle of the pack -- and at a time when education is becoming even more important.

The authors also point out the importance of open immigration to our economy. A major problem distorting the whole immigration debate is the focus on illegal immigration. While the U.S. is graduating fewer scientists and engineers than our competitors, many of these graduates, in some disciplines the majority of them, are immigrants or foreign students. In the past, many of them stayed and became part of our technology infrastructure. Now the U.S. is seeing a brain drain with fewer foreign students coming here to study and fewer of them remaining, since there are many more opportunities in their home countries. Consider some sta-

Book Review

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tistics. Immigrants, particularly from India and China, are only 12 percent of the U.S. population, but they started 52 percent of the Silicon Valley high tech companies and account for 25 percent of U.S. global patents.

One of the causes for some of these problems is that both parties have been waging what the authors call a war on math and physics, although in different ways. The Republican war on math relates to budget deficits and debt. Consider Senator Kyl's comment that spending increases have to be offset with cuts elsewhere, but tax cuts don't need to be offset or Cheney's comment that deficits don't matter. The Democrat's war on math occurred more at the state and local level where they supported pay and especially pension increases that simply were not sustainable. The Republican war on physics is their refusal to accept the scientific findings on global warming and climate change and to even suggest it is a hoax. Both parties are complacent in

the underfunding of scientific research and development, the type of investments that are key to future economic growth and prosperity. For example, in 1957 when Sputnik was launched the federal government was investing about 0.6 percent of our GDP in R&D. In response to the challenge of Sputnik, this investment jumped to well over one percent for decades. It is now back to less than one percent and declining.

As a result of this low investment in the future and the resulting slow growth economy the nature of government is changing. It used to be about giving things to people (dividing up a growing pie), but now it is becoming more about taking things back -- spend less, save more and pay more taxes. All segments of the country need to understand and accept the seriousness of our problems and work collectively to address them. We were able to do this in the past with the Great Depression, WWII and the Cold War. We must do it again, if we are going to recover our prosperity and economic growth.

-- Olin Bray

Remembering LWVCNM's history

Editor's Note: The following is the second part of a series on the history of the LWVCNM given at the 1998 Salute to Albuquerque by long-time member JoAnne Ramponi, who has since died. Co-President Shelly Shepherd thought it contained interesting information that many members might like to know.

Georgia Smith (Tinker) was president during the adoption of a study of urban renewal. This study was centered around the city study titled "A Workable Program for the Prevention and Elimination of Slums and Blight in Albuquerque." This carried over to the presidency of Mrs. W.D. (Marian) Kelly.

Mrs. W.H. (Kathleen) Puder's presidency included a study of county finances that led to the adoption of a position for a short ballot. It appeared that good management in county government was hampered by frequent changes of elected officials. Often candidates were poorly qualified, and there was an inefficient transition between old and new officials.

The league adopted a study of election proce-

dures in Bernalillo County which led to support of a number of procedures such as showing proof of property ownership in bond elections, enforced training of election officials, updating of the election code and making instruction in poll books conform to voting machine use. A study of local tax structure resulted in the modification of the position adopted in 1957 supporting reassessment and equalization of valuation of property. This is also the time that the Metropolitan Flood Control Authority came into being. Gayle Irick served as president during this time and feels that this how her husband became involved in politics.

When Trula Erlich (Johansson) became president the League was involved in programs that dealt with youth problems in the community. One of the positions that evolved from this was the "support of the establishment of foster and group homes, shelter facilities and increased probation and parole services for youth in Bernalillo County." This was an area of involvement of Trula for many years. The Albuquerque position and the Santa Fe position were

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LWVCNM's history

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incorporated into LWVNM's Juvenile Justice position.

In 1967 enabling legislation was passed that permitted Class A counties to make changes in election procedures. The local League was able to effectively lobby for change.

A two-year study of the Albuquerque Public Schools was adopted that resulted in two League publications. These were "The Albuquerque Public School system Organization, Operation" and "Financing, Part I of a Survey and Program, Part 2 of a Survey." Out of this came support for evening board of education meetings that would be more convenient to the public. During this time Romela Reinike and Louise Dean served as presidents.

The next presidents of league were Louise Greenhouse and Judy Lackner. It was during this time that the League directed its attention to local government, studying the efforts of city and county government in areas of housing, police protection and environmental protection. Judy remembers that the main thing League was working on was passage of the ERA. Judy stated that "Everyone was thrilled to death that New Mexico was one of the first states to pass the ERA," and that she was really excited about

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being able to do things with League.

Under Barbara Allender's presidency the League office moved into a storefront on Fifth Street. Barbara came to lead League -- not by being elected to the office, but because there was a vacancy and she was willing to step into the job. What she remembers the most is that Albuquerque Child Care, Inc. had an election for its board. Because of the problems that they had had in the past, the league was asked to run the election. "It was a real eye-opening experience in finding out who really was eligible to vote in the election. It was a new experience for many. LWVUS invited us to participate in a futures program in which we would discuss issues that were about future issues in the community." This meeting was in Puerto Rico and LWVUS paid for JoAnne Ramponi's trip (as representative of LWV/ABC). Among those speaking were the mayor of St. Paul; the person who co-authored "Black Power" with Stokely Carmichael; a federal judge; world economist Edmund Brown; and a person from a California think tank. Barbara Allender went on to serve many years with the United Way.

(To be continued in a future issue)



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