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Professor Lonna Atkeson to Speak at January Luncheon Meeting

The election is over and we have heard all of the pundits telling us what happened and why based on their opinions. The Jan. 10 League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico luncheon speaker will give us the real story based on a more careful analysis of the data rather than ideology. The speaker will be

Dr. Lonna Atkeson, a political science professor at the University of New Mexico. Her talk will focus on New Mexico but also address some of the national results.



Dr. Lonna Atkeson

Atkeson is also the director of the Center for the Study of Voting, Elections and Democracy. The purpose of the center is to promote the non-partisan study and evaluation of how elections are conducted, the role

of technology, identification of best practices and the effect of various election practices on the quality of representation within democracies, both developed and developing. Atkeson's research includes elections, campaigns, media, public opinion and political behavior, all key topics of interest to League members. Her work has been published in the major political science journals. She is a national expert in election administration and has received grants from the National Science Foundation and Pew Charitable Trusts.

Atkeson has received a number of honors and grants for her work. In 1998, she received the "Emerging Scholar" award from the Political Parties

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Office News

If you call the League office these days you may get our voicemail message telling you that the office is now staffed Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. until noon. Work has slowed down in the office, and we have decided to shorten our hours.

Volunteers will still get to the office about 9:30 a.m. to handle the mail and messages and will answer the phone if it rings, but our official hours now begin at 10 a.m. The new Member Handbook will have the old hours.

For many years the League office was an extremely busy place around election time, and on Election Day we had shifts of multiple volunteers handling two phone lines and looking up polling sites. Times have certainly changed. Today there is greater access to information online, the County Clerk's office has sufficient phone lines and a user-friendly website and voting is spread over several days rather than occurring only on one day. This year the League office was busy leading up to Election Day, but we fielded only 32 calls on that day, the majority of which were in the morning and early afternoon. In the future we will most certainly want to expand our office hours during the election season but will not be open all day on Election Day itself. You can rest assured, however, that should things change, we will adjust.

--Diane Goldfarb

January Calendar

Jan. 3	Board meeting, 5:30 p.m.
Jan. 5	Voter deadline
Jan. 8	Evening Unit, 6 p.m.
Jan. 10	Luncheon Unit, 11:45 a.m.
Jan. 12	Program Planning, 9:30 a.m. (followed by LWCNM Board Retreat)
Jan. 28	NE Heights Unit, 10:30 a.m.
Feb. 5	League Day at the Legislature

**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.

Program Planning Set for Jan. 12

Members of the LWVCNM will meet to plan our program for the coming year at 9:30 a.m. on Jan. 12, 2013. Peggy Howell has generously offered her home at 6300 Torreon Drive NE as a meeting place.

We will discuss our local and state program plans for the coming year. This is a wonderful way to become more involved in league activities and to join in planning future activities, so please join us for this important meeting.

Don't forget to bring your handbook. It contains all the state and local positions of the league and we will use it as a basis of discussion. At this meeting we review our league positions and discuss possible study issues for the future. -- Karen Wentworth

Member News

Member Pauline Eisenstadt won Best Political Book of 2012 (NM and AZ) for her book *A Woman in Both Houses*. Many of you will remember the review that Pauline gave of her book at the December 2011 luncheon meeting .

Presidents' Corner

By Shelly Shepherd, Co-President

Happy New Year! Sandra and I hope you had a wonderful holiday season. Along with the New Year comes the Legislation Session, with many new New Mexico House of Representative and Senate members. The session begins at noon, Jan. 15 and ends at noon, March 16. The LWVNM Board met Nov. 17, and the Action Committee is already gearing up to lobby for important legislation, such as Medicaid expansion and implementing the Affordable Care Act. I prefer the term advocating to lobbying, as the League of Women Voters are non-partisan, study issues thoroughly, develop positions by consensus and advocate based on these positions. The League does not advocate based on political party or special interest. For this reason the League of Women Voters has been a respected advocacy group for nearly a century.

I hope that some of you were able to attend the lobbying workshop that was held Dec. 1st in Santa Fe. At the LWVNM Board meeting in November there was a very brief discussion regarding the origin of the word lobbyist. I shared an entertaining story I heard on a city tour of Washington D.C. years ago. There is a legend that has been shared countless times in the District that the term "lobbyist" originated at the Willard Hotel when Ulysses S. Grant was in office (1869-1877). President Grant would frequent the hotel to enjoy brandy and a cigar. Mrs. Grant would not allow him to smoke in the White House. While he was there, President Grant was hounded by petitioners asking for legislative favors or jobs. It has been said that the "lobbyists" would come to the lobby where he was seated and then try to buy the president drinks in attempt to dilute his consciousness, which is when they would try to convince him into making political decisions. It was said that President Grant coined the term by referring to the petitioners as "those damn lobbyists." It is a fun story to tell tourists (I bought it), but the legend is just not true. After the tour, I simply had to visit the Willard Hotel, and the hotel is a historical landmark. President Grant visited the Willard Hotel and enjoyed his brandy and a cigar, but he did not coin the term "lobbyist."

The verb "to lobby" first appeared in print in the United States in the 1830's, at least thirty years before Ulysses S. Grant came to Washington. The term is believed to have originated in British Parliament and referred to the lobbies outside the chambers where wheeling and dealing took place. Jesse Sheidlower, editor-at-large for the Oxford English Dictionary, believes the term was used as early as 1640 in England to describe the lobbies that were open to

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The Price of Inequality, How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future

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 Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future by Joseph E. Stiglitz, 2012, W. W. Norton & Co., 414 pages

This book addresses a critical political issue that is frequently ignored or only addressed by ideology rather than facts and research. Stiglitz identifies and defines the problem (the extreme disparities in our economy), identifies the causes (both economic and political) and proposes some solutions. Along the way he considers some of the consequences of not addressing this problem. Stiglitz is not a ranter and raver. The Columbia University economist has a Nobel prize for his work on how information asymmetry, which almost always exists to some degree but is usually ignored, affects markets. He is also a former chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors and Chief Economist for the World Bank.

He defines our major problem (even more serious than the deficit and the debt) as the growing economic inequality in the U.S. For a third of a century (1968-2010) the real median income for a male worker stagnated dropping from \$32,844 to \$32,137. Of the growth in national income between 2002 and 2007 over 65 percent went to the top 1 percent. Of the gain in income from 2009 to 2010 the top 1 percent got 93 percent. In 2010 the typical CEO made 243 times what the typical worker did. (In the 1960s it was only in the 20 to 30 times range.) Many people talk about the major disparity in incomes, but he says that there is an even greater disparity in wealth.

Growth in the GDP per capita is no longer a good measure of the country's success because it ignores economic distribution. He describes the GINI coefficient, a standard economic measure of inequality, with .3 being a fairly equitable distribution like that found in most developed countries and .5 being highly inequitable as seen in many developing countries with strong oligarchies. Since 1980 the GINI coefficient for the US has grown from .40 to .47, which puts us in a dangerous area.

Some, especially on the right, contend that this inequality is an essential part of the market and

encourages economic growth. Stiglitz counters that while some inequality does provide an incentive, we have gone far beyond a reasonable level and it now has a negative impact. He supports his position with data from other developed countries with comparable growth and per capita income, but with far less inequality as shown by their GINI coefficients.

The causes of our disparity problem are both economic and political. Market failures clearly contribute to the problem, but he contends that our more serious problems are political. Political and economic policies affect how the markets operate. A major role of government is to avoid or correct market failures. Unfortunately, this is where ideology has a major impact, with the Right suggesting that markets can do no wrong and any failures are because of government intervention. Hence their emphasis on deregulation. However, political decisions set the rules of the game.

Stiglitz says markets can be effective only if two essential conditions are met. First, they must be competitive. Second, the incentives for the individuals in the market must be aligned with the needs of society. It is the role of government to ensure that these conditions are met. The markets will not do that by themselves. In fact, many players in the markets use their political clout to ensure that these conditions are not met. Economists talk about these players using their influence to extract "rents" -- payments above and beyond their real contribution. These rents are extracted using a variety of mechanisms, such as monopoly power, being granted resources (mineral rights, bandwidth, non-competitive procurements, or bailouts) at less than a fair market value.

During much of the post war period (until about 1980) economic growth was distributed fairly equitably. The rising tide really did raise all boats. However, starting in the 1980s the wealthy used their political clout to extract more than their share of the growth.

If "one person one vote" controls the political outcomes, then how was the one percent able to get decisions and policies so much in their favor? A key mechanism in this change was their ability to frame the issues in their favor and get most people to accept their position. For example, the estate tax was labeled a death tax that hurt small business and therefore reduced jobs. His position is that the real purpose of

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Presidents' Corner

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constituents to interact with their representatives. British author Charles Mackay's *Life and Liberty in America* (1857) stated that the word had already been coined. On page 103ff, McKay lists several "Americanisms," including, "lobbying, in most, if not all the states, (is) a recognized art and science among prominent outsiders of political life." Since those who practice an art are referred to as "artists" and those who practice science are referred to as "scientists." The author states it stands to reason that those who practice the art and science of lobbying would already have been referred to as "lobbyists."

Although several important things were

addressed in last year's 30-day legislative session, in addition to a \$5.6 billion budget, a number of vital issues were not addressed and should be addressed in the upcoming 60-day session. Some of the high profile issues will most certainly be immigrant driver's licenses, public employee pension solvency, third grade reading and teacher evaluations, removing the time limit for prosecuting second-degree murderers, requiring voters to show photo identification at the polls, allowing independent voters to vote in Republican and Democratic primaries and requiring public meetings agendas to be available 72 hours in advance instead of 24. The League has positions on many of these issues and will be on the alert to advocate for the passage of good bills as well as to advocate for non-passage of bills that are not in the best interest of the public.

Book Review

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the estate tax is to prevent an inherited oligarchy, which dramatically reduces everyone's opportunity for economic mobility. Also it affects very few small businesses and those it does affect can have a 14-year payment schedule. Another example is the different ways the bank crisis and the foreclosure problems were treated. The banks had to be bailed out to save the economy from an even worse disaster. Stiglitz agrees with this, but thinks there should have been a lot of conditions on the bailout. However, we couldn't write down troubled mortgages because that would be unfair to responsible homeowners and borrowers who did keep up their payments. In that case, what about the fairness of the bailout to those bankers who were responsible (mainly small and regional commercial bankers rather than large investment bankers) and not burdened with toxic loans?

Essentially all economic policies have multiple effects and distributional consequences. Sometimes (often) these issues are ignored or not analyzed correctly because of how the issue is framed. For example, Stiglitz has a major problem with the Federal Reserve on monetary policy. They want to keep inflation low and up to a point that is a valid policy. However, Stiglitz believes that the Fed has overemphasized preventing inflation at the expense of growth and that has contributed to our economic disparity. Keeping inflation down results in higher unemployment, which keeps wages down and slows growth. The winners are the bondholders and banks, while the

losers are the workers, both those who are unemployed and the employed who see a lower wage. An example of this is seen in the growth of wages and labor productivity. An implicit social contract in the post-war years was that wages would go up with productivity. If they went up more than productivity, it was supposed to be inflationary. However, what happened? Between 1980 and 2005 real median hourly wages went up an average of .33 percent per year while labor productivity went up an average of 1.73 percent per year. This type of discrepancy has a major effect. Between 1989 and 2011 productivity went up over 60 percent, while wages only went up 20 percent. This 40 percent difference represents a redistribution from the workers to the corporations and their executives.

The inequality problem is complex with many pieces. Stiglitz's solutions, most of them policies to correct market failures, address different parts of the problem. Some of them include: curbing excesses at the top, supporting and enforcing stronger competition laws, improving corporate governance, developing more progressive income and corporate tax systems and a more effective estate tax system, and improving access to education. The answer to our budget and deficit problems is not austerity. We must regain full employment and make critical public investments to increase growth and provide the resources to begin to address these problems in the long term.

This book is essential reading to understand the problems we face and what we should be doing about them.



Legislative Reception -- Some 20 LWVNM members welcomed newly-elected legislators at a Legislative Reception Dec. 9 at the home of Carol Tucker Trelease. The four legislators who attended are, from the left, Rep. Georgene Louis, Rep. William Rehm, Sen. Mark Moores and Rep. Elizabeth Thomas. (Photo by Cheryl Haaker)

Membership Committee

You will be receiving the *Voter* whether or not you have paid your dues for 2013, but this will be your last newsletter if you don't pay for this year. We hope that you will do so. If we have not heard from you, we will contact you. We don't want to lose any of you.

The Member Handbook has been printed for 2013. All members whose dues were paid by Nov 19 are included, and a handbook will be sent to all of you who have paid. -- Peggy Howell

January unit meetings

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and Organizations Section of the American Political Science Association. The University of New Mexico named her a Regents' Lecturer in 2001.

The luncheon 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. 7. The cost of lunch is \$15. To make a reservation, please call the LWVNM office at 884-8441 or email lunch@lwvnm.org.

Other unit meetings and their speakers include:

Evening Unit -- Jan. 8 at 6 p.m.

Olin Bray will summarize what happened in the election and what changes, if any, we can expect from the new Congress and why. The election was close enough that nobody can claim a clear mandate, but that won't stop them from trying. We will probably

League Day at Legislature set for Feb. 5

The annual LWVNM Legislative Reception and League Day at the Legislature are set for Feb. 4-5.

The two-day event begins with the reception Feb. 4 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Garrett's Desert Inn, 311 Old Santa Fe Trail in Santa Fe. The reception will feature a panel on improving election in New Mexico. Panelists will include: Viki Harrison, Director, Common Cause NM, to discuss "Election Protection and Campaign Finance Reform"; Denise Lamb, Santa Fe County Elections Director, to discuss the "Wisconsin Election Accountability Model"; and Dick Mason, LWVNM Leader and Action Chair, to discuss "LWVNM Priorities."

League Day will begin Feb. 5 with LWV members attending committee hearings at the Roundhouse from 8-10:15 a.m., followed by educational events and lunch at Garrett's Desert Inn from 10:30 a.m. to 1:45 p.m.

Morning speakers will include Nandini Kuehn, Ph. D., Health Care Expert, to discuss "Implementing the Affordable Care Act in New Mexico" and Ruth Hoffman, Director, Lutheran Advocacy, to discuss "Social Justice and Public Policy Issues for 2013."

The lunch speaker will be Mary Wilson, attorney, Immediate Past President of LWVUS. She will discuss "Essential Elements for Reforming Redistricting in New Mexico."

For further information on League Day, e-mail Dick Mason at action@lwvnm.org. See more in the

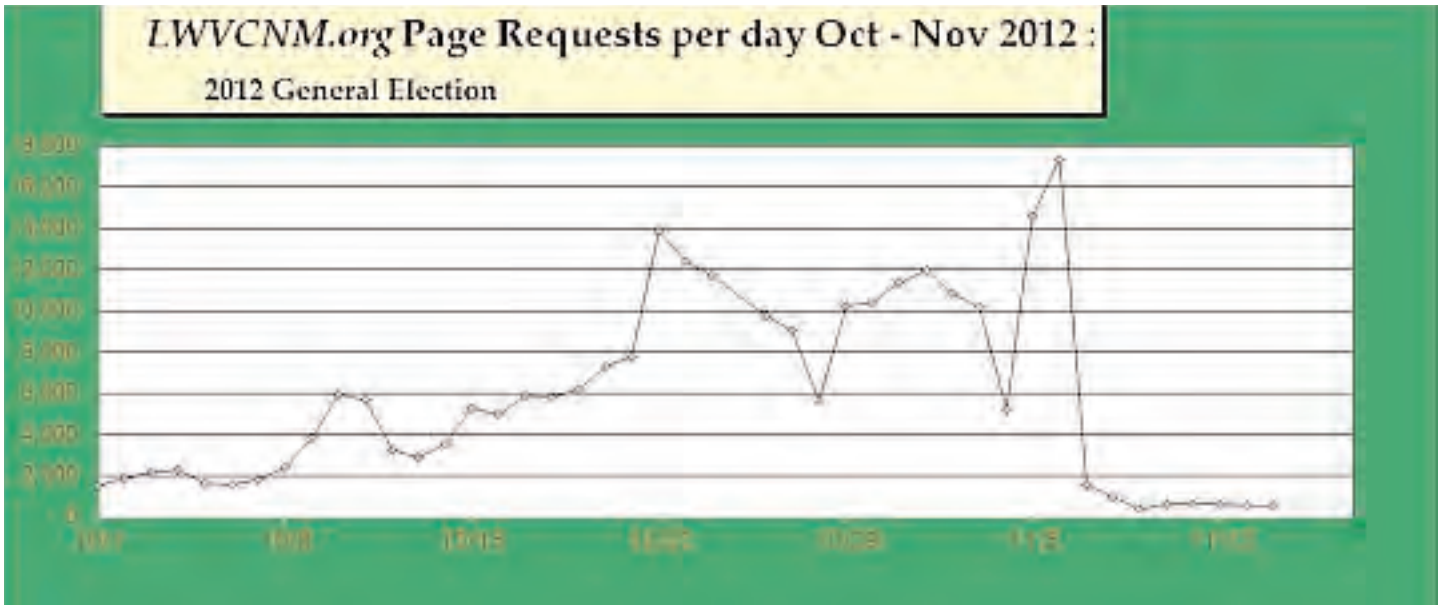
still see myths and ideology as still as important or even more important than data and analysis. However, with all of our current economic problems, analysis and compromise will become even more important than before. Olin is a long-time member of the League and writes the book review column in the *Voter*. He is also the author of the ebook *Political Incompetence: What's Wrong With Our System and How To Fix It*.

The meeting will be at 6 p.m. at the Erna Fergusson Library Community Room, 3700 San Mateo N.E.

NE Heights Unit --Jan. 28 at 10:30 a.m.

Cheryl Haaker, member of the LWVNM Action Committee, will discuss issues and bills the League is following in the legislative session.

The meeting will be held at 10:30 a.m. at the La Vida Llena Retirement Community, 10501 Lagrima de Oro N.E.



Webmonkey Cheryl Haaker provides this graph showing hits on the LWVCNM website before and after the Nov. 6 General Election. Hits peak on election day and then dramatically fall off thereafter. There were nearly 18,000 page requests on election day, Cheryl says.



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