



The Voter

League of Women Voters of
Central New Mexico
March 2014

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of Central New Mexico
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March Luncheon to Focus on Importance of Access to Public Information

The League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico will celebrate Sunshine Week at its March 13 Luncheon Unit meeting. It will feature a talk by speaker Randolph “Dolph” Barnhouse, attorney with the Albuquerque-based Johnson Barnhouse & Keegan law firm. Sunshine Week is March 16-22, a period devoted nationwide to discussions on the importance of access to public information.

The Johnson Barnhouse & Keegan law firm specializes in representation of Native American clients throughout the United States. In addition to his federal Indian law work, Barnhouse has worked on First Amendment and government access issues. As a law student he served on the board of the New Mexico ACLU, and helped the organization successfully challenge an Albuquerque ordinance that prohib-

ited people from placing “for sale” signs in their cars. As a young lawyer he worked in Phoenix with a firm that ran Arizona’s “media hotline” that provided immediate legal advice to members of the Arizona media on public meetings and public records issues. He also worked with the Arizona ACLU, successfully challenging a city ordinance that prohibited people from placing political signs in their yards.

Before joining Johnson Barnhouse & Keegan, Barnhouse was executive director of 1000 Friends of New Mexico and served as executive director of DNA-People’s Legal Services, which serves members of seven tribes in three states. Barnhouse is a Certified Appellate Specialist and has argued cases before the United States Supreme Court, the New Mexico Supreme Court, the New York Court of Appeals, the Navajo Nation Supreme Court and the Second, Fifth, Seventh and Ninth US Circuit Courts of Appeals. He holds both a JD and an MBA from the University of New Mexico. Barnhouse is a recipient of the State Bar of New Mexico’s Courageous Advocacy Award and in 2012 received the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government’s William S. Dixon First Amendment Freedom Award for his successful appellate work in a case that strictly limited executive privilege and other exemptions to disclo-

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LWVCNM Members to Assist in Gubernatorial Candidate Forum

The Bernalillo County Democratic Party is sponsoring a Gubernatorial Candidate Forum for the candidates for the Democratic Party ticket for governor. All five candidates will be in the forum. The forum will be held Wednesday, March 5 at 6-8 p.m. at Carpenter’s Hall, 3900 Pan American Freeway NE (at Comanche).

LWVCNM member Steve Wentworth will be moderator with Karen Wentworth as helper. Gayle Prinkey will be timekeeper.

The candidates are Attorney General Gary King, NM State Senator Linda Lopez, NM State Senator Howie Morales, Lawrence Rael and Alan Webber.

March Calendar

March. 5	Voter deadline
March. 6	Board meeting, 5:30 p.m.
March. 11	Evening Unit, 6 p.m.
March 13	Luncheon Unit, 11.45 a.m.
March. 24	NE Heights Unit, 10 a.m.
March 30	Play Fundraiser, 2 p.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
Mental Health Study

Jan Bray & Shelly Shepherd

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

The *Voter* is distributed via email and can be accessed online at our website www.lwvcnm.org.

President's Corner

By Andrea Targhetta

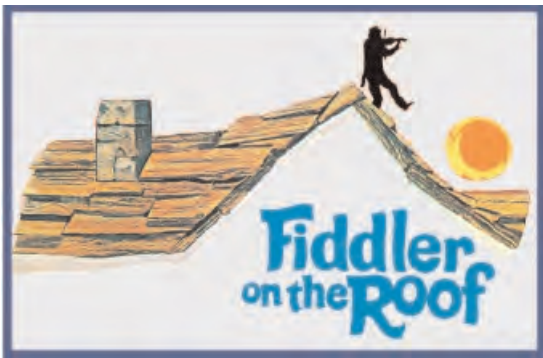
LWVUS has conducted a national update to the Agriculture position as voted by the 2012 Convention. The committee consisted of nine members who enlisted input from all local organizations. This committee produced around 27 papers of fact-filled information in accordance with the League's policies on concurrence. These papers are to be read and discussed, and questions are to be answered in order to come to a conclusion as to whether the local leagues concur or not. This has been a massive undertaking which concluded this past December.

The national organization has an April 4 deadline for leagues to read the papers, meet several times to discuss the issues, gather to answer the consensus questions (which might take more meetings) and send that information back to LWVUS. There are 11 multiple-choice consensus questions. In light of the short time in which to respond, the LWVCNM Board has opted instead to use the study as a guideline in our orientation of new members and allow them to see how our organization works to provide balanced information and educate ourselves and the public on issues of importance to our community.

In addition to our newest members being exposed to the study on updating our national agriculture position, I am asking each of you to visit the LWVUS website www.lwv.org and type "Agriculture Study" in the search box. There you will find all the educational research papers to read and digest. To get a balanced view of the complex issues involved in our U.S. agriculture policy, there are three documents and three websites suggested by LWVUS for you to read. Each has a differing point of view. It will take time, but it will be informational and rewarding.

There are many issues involved with this subject that we may not have even considered. Subjects such as farm, water, animal and pesticide management may be on our list of known issues. However, there are soil management, food safety matters, plant breeding, seed issues and biodiversity to also consider. How many of us even think of nanotechnology in connection with agriculture? I am sure Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) may have even made it into your vocabulary.

Our national organization has produced their usual, thoughtful and thorough undertaking. The update will be presented at this year's Dallas convention in June. Whether it has consensus or not, these are highly-important issues on which we most likely will be looking to advocate one way or another. Please keep watch for the LWVUS disposition of this study update.



Theater Event Set for March 30

Be sure to attend this year's annual LWVCNM Theater Event fund raiser scheduled for Sunday, March 30 from 2-5 p.m. at the Rodey Theatre (next to Popejoy Hall) at UNM in Albuquerque.

Fiddler on the Roof will be presented by Landmark Musicals, followed by a reception and a belated League birthday celebration on the upstairs foyer.

Fiddler is a celebration of life and its challenges. Set in 1905 in a small Jewish village in Russia, it is the story of dairyman, Tevye, and his attempts to preserve his family's traditions in a changing world.

To reserve your seat, mail a check to the LWVCNM office for \$30 per person with a notation that the check is for *Fiddler* tickets. RSVP no later than March 17. Your actual tickets will be available before the performance at the LWV table just outside Rodey Theater.

March Units

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sure of public records by private contractors

The Luncheon Unit 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 March 10. The cost of lunch is \$15. To make a reservation call the LWVCNM office at 884-8441. Email to lunch@lwvcnm.org. Ask about your menu options.

Evening Unit -- March 11 at 6 p.m..

The Evening Unit will feature three girls from the American Legion Auxiliary Girls State. This is a unique opportunity to see how the American Legion is molding young citizens. Girls State is a nonpartisan program that teaches girls who are high school seniors responsible citizenship. Nearly one million young women have had the opportunity to learn first-hand how their state and local governments work.

While at Girls State they participate in a mock government scenario. They run for office, vote and take part in government in action. They also write

bills that are presented to the Girls State House and Senate to be debated and voted upon.

Speaking at the meeting will be the 2012 governor, the 2013 girls nation senator and a former delegate.

New Mexico Girls State is held at Eastern New Mexico University in Portales. After completing this week-long Girls State program, the young women receive three college credit hours that are transferable to any college.

The Evening Unit meets at 6 p.m. at the Erna Fergusson Library, 3700 San Mateo Blvd.N.E.

North East Heights Unit -- March 24 at 10 a.m. :

During this year's legislative budget session in Santa Fe, what bills were passed and what was not? Dick Mason, chair of the LWVNM Action Committee, will discuss this year's 30-day legislative session.

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

Fate of the States: The New Geography of American Prosperity

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*

Fate of the States: The New Geography of American Prosperity by Meredith Whitney, 2013, Portfolio/Penguin, hardcover, 260 pages.

We have all heard about the increasing income inequality among individuals. Whitney focuses on a similar inequality among the states. Whitney's expertise as a financial advisor is on the fiscal issues, not their related policy implications. However, she does identify some important issues that need to be addressed.

In the past many of the coastal and western states (e.g. CA, FL, AZ, NV) led the U.S. in terms of economic and job growth, with the central and rust belt states lagging. Now this situation has reversed due to the housing collapse and fiscal irresponsibility on the part of many state and local governments. Given rapid economic growth and escalating home prices, many governments increased services and wages and benefits of their government workers to unsustainable levels. With low interest rates bonding was also increased too much. Then with declining tax revenue many of these state and local governments were left with high debt and high underfunded

pension liabilities. Legally both of these types of liabilities take precedence over funding for government services such as education, public safety and transportation. Public employee pensions have grown to unsustainable levels and have been significantly underfunded. Some of the problems, when compared to private pension plans which are rapidly disappearing, include early retirement (after 20 or 25 years) with full pensions, lack of employee contributions to their pension funds and a pension amount based on the last year rather than an average of the last several years. This last problem leads to loading income into the last year with a lot of overtime and accumulated vacation and sick leave. Most private plans limit the amount of vacation one can accumulate and do not pay for unused sick leave.

Whitney points out that debt per capita now varies tremendously among the states. This high per capita debt limits what these state and local governments can do other than cut services and increase taxes, which results in an outflow of people and jobs, which further reduces tax revenue. Many of the central states, with much lower per capita debt, have the resources and are spending them on education, infrastructure and job creation, while the high debt states are cutting this type of spending.

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Book Report

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Although Whitney does point out some serious budget and economic problems many state and local governments are facing, she tends to ignore some of the related policy issues. For example, some of the low debt states kept their budgets and debt low by not providing many important services. Also high per capita debt needs to be considered in terms of per capita income and cost of living, both of which she mostly ignores. For example, Texas has both low per capita debt and a low cost of living (no income tax and housing prices about half of California's), but it also has one of the highest poverty rates in the country and one of the highest uninsured rates.

She mentions North Dakota's rapid growth in both jobs and housing prices, but unlike in California where house prices were driven by speculation, North Dakota's prices are driven by a growing population and jobs. Much of North Dakota's economic and job growth is driven by the oil industry. Whitney contends that many of California's economic problems could be solved if they were willing to exploit their oil finds, which are comparable to North Dakota's.

Finally, she contends that many of the problems of state and local governments could be solved by privatization, i.e. selling assets for immediate revenue. Unfortunately, she ignores the fact that governments are

about services, unlike business where revenues and costs are the only issue. Effective privatization, which can help solve some of the problem, is much more complicated than she seems to realize.

In summary, this book points out some serious problems that must be addressed, but it is less helpful in proposing solutions. However, in identifying these problems and their seriousness the book provides an incentive to try to find viable, i.e. real and politically acceptable solutions.

Big Turnout at Corrales Forum

An estimated crowd of 300-400 turned out on Feb. 6 to hear candidates for the Corrales Village Council and Mayor. Sponsored by the Village of Corrales and arranged by Village Administrator John Avila and his staff, LWVC-NM was asked to provide moderating and time keeping assistance. The Old Church was over capacity, with many people standing as the seven candidates answered questions from the audience. In my years of moderating forums I have seen both large and small audiences, but this was a record in a village of only 8,000 residents! It was obvious that Corraleños care passionately about their community. The League of Women Voters received good exposure from this event in Sandoval County. Thanks go to Gayle Prinkey, Don Goldfarb, Laura Stokes and Marjory Swartz for their assistance that evening. -- *Diane Goldfarb*

