



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS<sup>®</sup> OF CENTRAL NEW MEXICO

2315 San Pedro Drive NE, Suite F-6 ♦ Albuquerque, NM 87110-4158 ♦ (505) 884-8441 ♦ [www.wvcnm.org](http://www.wvcnm.org) ♦ <https://www.facebook.com/LWVCNM>

March 2019

## The VOTER

Volume: 84 Issue: 03

### Co-President Report March 2019

This year the League is endorsing a number of bills now in the New Mexico legislature. The state advocacy committee is keeping a particularly close watch on the ethics legislature. The League is also leading an effort to establish an independent redistricting commission that would take drawing legislative districts out of the hands of lawmakers. Since the legislature is still in session, we'll have a legislative wrap-up in April.

The League is also particularly interested in one piece of national legislation, HR1. This bill tackles a variety of voter issues. It seeks to

End congressional district gerrymandering

Allow same day voter registration nationally

Allow automatic and online voter registration

It also seeks to restore the Voting Rights Act which was struck down two years ago in a federal court decision. In the past this act has been beneficial to New Mexico because it allowed the U.S. Department of Justice to file suit against communities that passed local measures to suppress voter participation or who drew commission or council districts in a way that deliberately stacked the deck against specific candidates.

The bill stops voter purges based on failure to vote. It also allows small dollar public financing which may make it easier for citizens to have a voice in elections and provides a 6 to 1 dollar match. The means for every dollar a candidate raises, the federal government would contribute 6 dollars. It is meant to be a way for candidates who don't have the means to raise millions of dollars from donors to participate in federal races.

This bill is supposed to come to a floor vote in the U.S. House of Representatives some time in late February or early March. The U.S. League strongly supports this legislation. We will update you on Topics when the vote is taken.

On another topic, the U.S. Supreme Court is taking up the question of whether we will be asked whether we are U.S. Citizens on the census forms. They promise a ruling by June. This is especially important in New Mexico because we need everyone in the state to feel comfortable in filling out census forms. The number of people included in the count affects the amount of money we get from the federal government for Medicaid reimbursement and a host of other programs.

This is an exciting time to be a member of the

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Monday - Wednesday - Friday  
10 am to Noon

## MARCH 2019

**Thursday, March 7 5:30 pm LWVCNM Board Meeting**  
Sutin Thayer & Browne  
6100 Uptown Blvd, 4<sup>th</sup> floor  
Enter on North side of building. Doors are locked after 6 pm

**Monday, March 11 Reservation Deadline for Luncheon**

**Thursday, March 14 Luncheon Unit Meeting**  
Topic: "Open government in New Mexico"

**Friday, March 15 Deadline for Voter Submissions**

**Monday, March 25 NE Heights Unit Meeting**

## APRIL 2019

**Thursday, April 4 5:30 pm LWVCNM Board Meeting**  
Sutin Thayer & Browne  
6100 Uptown Blvd, 4<sup>th</sup> floor  
Enter on North side of building. Doors are locked after 6 pm

**Monday, April 8 Reservation Deadline for Luncheon**

**Thursday, April 11 Luncheon Unit Meeting**  
Topic: Education in Civics & Government  
Chairs: George Richmond & Trish Lopez

**Monday, April 15 Deadline for Voter Submissions**

**Monday, April 22 NE Heights Unit Meeting**  
Topic: Education in Civics & Government  
Chairs: George Richmond & Trish Lopez

## APRIL VOTER IS THE CALL TO ANNUAL MEETING EDITION

*All officer reports and biographies are due on*  
**Friday, March 15th**

## AMAZON SMILE

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/85-0355179>

## **Co-President Report ....Continued from page 1**

League of Women Voters® . There are a dozen ways members can participate in League activities to help make democracy stronger and fairer in our state. Thomas Jefferson said, “Democracy is not a spectator sport.” That still holds today, and we have all chosen not to be spectators by joining the League. Included in this edition of the Voter is an array of volunteer opportunities. Please sign up for something. The League needs your participation.



### **Sunshine Month Melanie J. Majors to speak on transparency in state and local agencies, and pending open government legislation**

Melanie J. Majors, whose 30-year professional career in New Mexico has spanned the fields of journalism, communications and public relations, is executive director of the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government.

Majors served on the FOG board of directors until stepping down in April to fill in as interim director. She took the reins as the permanent director on Aug. 1.

In 2010 she opened her own Communication firm, The Majors Company, specializing in media training, crisis communication and strategic planning. She still conducts media training.

She started her career as a print reporter where she earned an AP Citation and several NMPA awards for her news coverage. She moved to Albuquerque in 1984 and became a news pro-

ducer at KOB-TV4, working in both news and promotions. After moving into public relations, she has provided senior level counsel and strategic relations for some of New Mexico’s leading corporations and major projects including the New Mexico State Engineer, the New Mexico State Fair, the New Mexico Department of Transportation, the New Mexico Office of the Attorney General and the U.S. Department of Energy where she provided technical support to assist the DOE in the development and implementation of public information and public participation community relations program for the Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action Project, a \$2 billion, 20 year effort. She is also a media trainer for the New Mexico Broadcasters Association.

She is the author of numerous publications, including articles published in local, national and international media.

Ms. Majors is active in the communications community: she is a past board member of the Foundation for Open Government; a past president of the New Mexico Chapter of Public Relations Society and a former member of the board of directors of the National Federation of Press Women.

In 2008, the New Mexico chapter of the Public Relations Society of America awarded her the Vista Award.

She is a graduate of the University of New Mexico’s journalism school and is currently an adjunct professor in that department.

Everyone is welcome at the luncheon, but you must make a reservation by 10 a.m. on Monday, March 11. You can call in your reservation to  
**continued on page 4...**

## Sunshine Month ....continued from page 3

the League office at (505) 884-8441, email [lunch@lwvcnm.org](mailto:lunch@lwvcnm.org) or PRE-PAY. "It is now possible to **pre-pay online for the luncheon** by going to [www.lwvcnm.org](http://www.lwvcnm.org) and to **Contribute** and then **Donate**. Donate \$22 (or \$44 for 2). Jan, LWVCNM treasurer, will identify that as a luncheon pre-payment! Pre-payments must be made by midnight Wednesday, March 13."

Cost of lunch is \$22. Your reservation is your commitment to pay.



### Aja Nicole Brooks

will present an overview of the Center's Arbitration, Settlement Facilitation and Foreclosure Settlement Programs, and the Peter H. Johnstone Day March 25th at La Vida Llena

Aja Nicole Brooks is a native New Mexican, born in Hobbs. She is a graduate of Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where she received her Bachelor of Arts in English and Spanish. She attended the University of New Mexico School of Law and graduated with her juris doctorate in 2008. Thereafter, she worked as a criminal defense attorney in Albuquerque for the Law Office of the Public Defender in its metropolitan and felony divisions from 2008 until 2014. From 2014 until January 2019, she served as the Statewide Pro Bono Coordinator for New Mexico Legal Aid's Volunteer Attorney Program where she helped provide pro bono opportunities for low-income individuals. She is currently employed as the Director for the Second Judicial District Court's Center for Self-Help and Dispute Resolution. Brooks is involved in many legal groups and activities, including the Young Lawyers Division, the Committee on Diversity in the Legal Profession and the

Bridge the Gap Mentorship Program. She is the President of the New Mexico Black Lawyers Association and is a Bar Commissioner for the First District of the State Bar of New Mexico.



## Nusenda Credit Union Presents Grant to LWVCNM

At the February 14, 2019 Monthly Luncheon of the The League of Women Voters® Central New Mexico, John DuBois, Business Development Officer, Nusenda Credit Union, presented Karen Wentworth, Co-President, LWVCNM with a Community Award for \$1,500.00.

The Nusenda Credit Union Community Rewards Program works in several areas. Here is some more about what they do from their website:

When we work together, we have the power to create positive change in our communities across New Mexico. That's the philosophy behind our Community Rewards program, available with all Nusenda Credit Union [personal checking accounts](#)

In addition to helping you reach your financial goals, we're committed to supporting the community initiatives that you care about. With every signature-based transaction that you make with your [Nusenda Visa® Debit Card](#), you earn cash back and we contribute a cash reward to the community and category of your choice.\*

There's no limit to the rewards you can earn during the year-long program period. Then, based off your designation, we'll direct your contribution toward your selected focus area – [Education](#), [Healthcare](#), [the Arts](#), [Environment and Wildlife](#), and [Community Services and Support](#) – in the community of your choice.

LWVCNM provides services in Education and Community Services and Support with its

“The Voter Guide” and “Who’s Who” as well as Candidate Forums and registering voters.

George Richmond,  
4<sup>th</sup> Vice President, Fund Raising

### **Naturally**

Birds and bees and grass and trees,  
All beings need fresh air.  
Governments across the globe  
Must agree to do their share.  
The goal to set is “Carbon Neutral”  
And give up our combustion engines.  
We take the lead and push real hard  
For bio-mass positions.  
A natural earth is our major goal.  
It’s not the status quo.  
Instruct our leaders - we need now  
New laws that make it so.

*Judith Binder*

### **Book Report**

***Them: Why We Hate Each Other and How to Heal*** by Ben Sasse, 2018, St. Martin’s Press, Hardcopy, 272 pages.

Ben Sasse is a senator from Nebraska, a history PhD from Yale, and a former college president. The book makes a lot of good points that are well worth thinking about and considering how they affect our political, social, and cultural environment. Parts of it should be taken with a grain of salt. Some of his points he supports with research finding, but some are more opinions, sometimes without distinguishing which is which. However, some of the points not supported are still worth considering because they may be valid or partly valid in some cases But he does get “preachy” in places.

The book has three parts — collapsing tribes, anti-tribes, and a to do list. His key point is that we should focus on what unites us rather than what divides us. He blames a lot of our

problems on the breakdown of the sense of community and identity. Unfortunately, if nothing else unites us, we can use a common enemy, which leads us to anti-tribes — a destructive path. His background and bias is toward small, close-knit, rural communities, which our growing mobility and technology is destroying. He would like to restore that sense of community or create a modern equivalent. He says that technology (Internet) gives us connectivity, but not engagement and a sense of community. However, this is his opinion not necessarily supported by research. Some Internet communities are very trusting and have a strong sense of community, but there may be a generational difference in this effect.

He also talks about media and journalism as critical to the survival of democracy because they lead to informed citizens and participation. It is legitimate to criticize biased stories and questions, but not media and journalism in general. However, he does believe that the media structure, technology, and 24/7 news cycle contribute to our problems. The media used to be (through the 1970s and 1980s) a uniting force, but now with hundreds of channels it is fragmenting us with each small group able to see its own reality. For example, in the 1950s I Love Lucy had a 70 percent market share and later the final episode of M\*A\*S\*H had a 54 percent share. Now the highly popular Game of Thrones gets 4 percent and popular pundits such as Hannity and Maddow get less than 1 percent. By picking their sources each group can create its own echo chamber and reinforce its own reality, often as anti-tribes. He emphasizes the point that journalism is not entertainment and that our current “politertainment” is a poor substitute for serious policy debate. ***Continued on page 6....***

**Book Report** *Continued on page 6....* He contends that this is just another example of emphasizing what divides rather than unites us. Another point he makes is that we need to use technology as a tool rather than as a distraction. He says that good game developers deliberately try to make their games more addictive to capture and hold our attention. In the past technology tended to drive down the costs of production, but now it focuses on driving down transaction costs. Uber and Lyft would shift us from owning cars to easy ride sharing, which might lead in the future to car sharing. We really don't need to own many things if they are easily, cheaply, and quickly available when we need them. However, such as shift could drastically lower the demand for things and have major effects on the economy.

His to do list has three items. First, reject anti-tribes. Group identities should be around positive things not negative things. Second, put politics in its place. He contends that politics is only a part, and for most people a small part, of our lives. (He contends that political junkies — those obsessed with politics — are relative few, at least outside of Washington, but they are very vocal and get a lot of attention.) Community and relationships are much more important and larger parts of our lives. Politics is about power, but more importantly civics is about who we are. He quotes some of our leaders from Washington and others who have emphasized that internal conflict and civil disorder are our greatest enemy, not external threats. Finally, he says live locally. Focus on community and build social capital through relationships and cooperation.

The book is well worth reading, whether you agree with him politically or not. He emphasizes debate rather than argument and finding points of agreement rather than disagreement. He seems one of the few in Washington interested in serious discussion and compromise rather than politics as power to get your way regardless of any opposition.

*Olin Bray*

## Birthday Fun at the February Luncheon

