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The VOTER

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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF CENTRAL NEW MEXICO
6739 Academy Rd. NE, Suite 124, Albuquerque, NM 87109

MONTHLY MESSAGE FROM YOUR CO- PRESIDENTS, **By Karen Douglas and Donna Sandoval**

The in-person LWVCNM Annual Meeting in May, 2022, at the Sheraton Hotel promised a future with opportunities to gather again, openly share our perspectives, and interact with each other in a venue which permitted multiple concurrent discussions. Following this event, LWVCNM membership returned to the pre-pandemic level of 202 members. This also resulted in plans to experiment with hybrid unit meetings to be held at the new office complex at 6739 Academy Blvd. NE, with bring-your-own lunches until some guarantee of permanence is reestablished. We were disappointed that more than twice as many members attended our July 14th meeting via Zoom as attended in person. This was our pilot effort. It featured both in-person and Zoom speakers, who educated members and guests regarding the upcoming November vote on a Constitutional Amendment—Permanent Funding for Childhood Education via the Land Grant Permanent Fund. Our August 11th meeting will be via Zoom only, but we will plan another hybrid meeting to better gauge the level of member interest.

On Saturday, June 11, 2022, LWVCNM held our annual Calendar Planning Meeting via Zoom to identify monthly speakers and topics through August, 2023, as well as members willing

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LEAGUE CALENDAR

Announcement re: Future Meetings: With the ever-changing COVID environment, we are stepping thoughtfully into the new frontier as we begin the return to in-person meetings. We will continue to keep our eyes on the evolving situation. **There are three possibilities for upcoming meetings—In-person, hybrid (in-person and Zoom combined), and Zoom-only.** Depending on the meeting type, speaker/moderator preference, and potential COVID concerns, we will select one of the three options. Please watch *The Voter* and *Topics* announcements for each program/event. We appreciate your patience as we work out the best scenario for each meeting.

August 11 (Thursday), 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m., [Zoom only—Monthly LWVCNM meeting.](#) Speaker: Dr. Halea Meese, Resident Physician, UNM Department of Family and Community Medicine. Topic: Health Care Based Voter Registration Efforts.

September 8 (Thursday), 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m., [Monthly LWVCNM meeting.](#) Topic: Voter Education, Part One—Mid-Term Elections from the Counties' Perspective.

October 13 (Thursday), 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m., [Monthly LWVCNM meeting.](#) Speakers: Sara Solovitch, Executive Director and Editor of *Searchlight NM*; and Trip Jennings, *NM in Depth*. Topic: Voter Education, Part Two—The Misinformation Challenge.

Further details about the September and October meetings will follow via the September and October issues of the VOTER, as well as via *Topics* email announcements and at www.lwvcnm.org.

The deadline for the monthly Voter remains the 15th of each month. Please submit your articles to Anne Pierce-Jones, VOTER editor, at apiercejones@outlook.com.

OFFICE HOURS

Closed until further notice due
to Covid concerns.

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Monthly Co-Presidents' Message, continued from page 1...

to coordinate these monthly unit meetings. While many valuable topics were recommended, it was unfortunate that the turnout was so low. Participation by more members could assure that topics would be well-received.

There have been recent improvements in Albuquerque Police Department (APD) compliance with the 276 measurable paragraphs of the 2014 Consent Decree, with particular emphasis on APD Internal Affairs investigations of Use of Force and training of both Police Academy cadets and sworn officers. A more accurate discussion of these achievements will follow the July 26 Federal court hearing. The hearing will feature Dr. Ginger (the Independent Monitor) briefing Judge Browning, followed by Department of Justice, Albuquerque Police Department, City of Albuquerque attorneys, Civilian Police Oversight Agency, and the three Amici groups (including the APD Forward Coalition, with LWV membership). The outcome of this quarterly measure of satisfaction with APD progress will be discussed in future VOTER issues.

Bernalillo County Commission Observer Report—July, 2022

The Bernalillo County Commission is trying to deal with serious staffing problems at the Metropolitan Detention Center. A proposed stipulated order in the McClendon lawsuit against the county was on the Commission’s agenda in June, but was abruptly pulled and not voted on. The proposed order said that the county would hire an additional 111 full-time corrections officers to bring staffing levels at the detention center to a total of 381 officers. No reason was given for postponing the agreement, but media reports since then indicate the county plans to significantly increase pay for corrections officers.

Meanwhile, at the same meeting, the state’s chief public defender spoke during public testimony to say that he would no longer allow public defenders to go into the MDC to meet with their clients because he believed their safety could not be guaranteed.

It is not clear exactly what is happening at the MDC, or whether inmates are housed in a safe environment.

The only relevant League position on this issue is from the LWVUS Impact on Issues: “The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that democratic government

Bernalillo County Commission Observer Report—July, 2022, continued from page 3...

Depends on informed and active participation at all levels of government. The League further believes that governmental bodies must protect the citizens’ right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.”

—Submitted by Karen Wentworth, Bernalillo County Commission Observer

Office, Website, and Zoom Update

There have been many changes in the past year, some required by necessity and others to improve the LWVCNM visibility and information distribution. Covid presented and continues to present many challenges for us all.

Zoom - Our Thursday monthly meetings went online via Zoom. Many of us only know other members as a box on a screen. The topics and speakers for these meetings are excellent. There is considerable effort expended for every meeting to make them informative and timely for you. We are aware there are members that don’t use Zoom or have other lunchtime commitments and are missing the meetings. We have a solution for that! By using Zoom we have been able to record the meetings (with presenter permission) and make the recordings available to you on our website – LWVCNM.org on the For Members page. Zoom will continue to be used for meetings into the foreseeable future even as we move to more in-person events. Watch for format information about each meeting when it is announced. Need help using Zoom? Give us a call or send us an email and we’ll be happy to help.

Website – The LWVCNM.org website has been redesigned! If you haven’t looked at it in a while, please check it out! The new design makes finding information easier for members and visitors. We added a useful links section on the right and updated the menu items at the top. Our goal was to simplify and streamline the site. We would be happy to hear your thoughts and comments. This is a site for all of us!

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Office, Website, & Zoom Update, continued from page 4...

Office – Since our move in July 2021 the office has been primarily staffed by volunteers working remotely. They have kept us productive and maintained our reputation as a respected source of information. The questions we are asked are varied and some require a bit of research. We frequently find that we learn as much from finding the answer as the caller does. There are volunteers that do work in the office on occasion to perform certain tasks. The conference room has been used on many occasions - most recently for the July monthly meeting and the quarterly LWVNM meeting. Both were hybrid meetings meaning some attendees were in person and others were participating on Zoom.

The office always needs more volunteers. Volunteering one or more days a month is an excellent way to become more involved and get a deeper understanding of why the League is so important to the voters of Bernalillo, Sandoval, Tarrant and Valencia counties. Not everyone uses a computer, but they still want information and have questions. We are answering calls and processing mail for them (and for other things of course)!

Submitted by Starlyn Brown

Calendar Planning, September, 2022 through August, 2023

A group of ten members met on Saturday, June 11, 10 AM-Noon, to map out program ideas for the second Thursday monthly educational program series through August 2023. Additionally, two members, who were unable to attend the meeting, submitted program ideas via email. The group selected topics and a coordinator for each meeting. As new issues of interest arise through the course of the year or a proposed speaker is not available, topics and/or speakers may change.

If members have additional ideas for program topics and speakers, please email Jennifer Black at jblack8162@gmail.com and we will put your ideas in a “tickle” file. Several topics already in the “tickle” file are Ethics Commission update, reproductive rights, and understanding Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

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Calendar Planning, September, 2022, through August, 2023, continued...

See the Calendar Announcements on Page Two for the September and October 2022 program topics. Other proposed topics for the year include:

--November: An International Perspective on Elections: The International Standardization of Election Processes

--December: TBD

--January: A New Year of Advocacy: The League's State Legislative Advisory Agenda

--February: State League Development in New Mexico

--March: Sunshine Month--Ethics and Government Transparency Issues

--April: Earth Day Month—Climate/Environmental/Sustainability Issues

--May: Annual Meeting, Keynote Speaker TBD

--June: Civics Awareness

--July: New Mexico Policy: Sentencing, Recidivism, Prison System and Inmates' Conditions

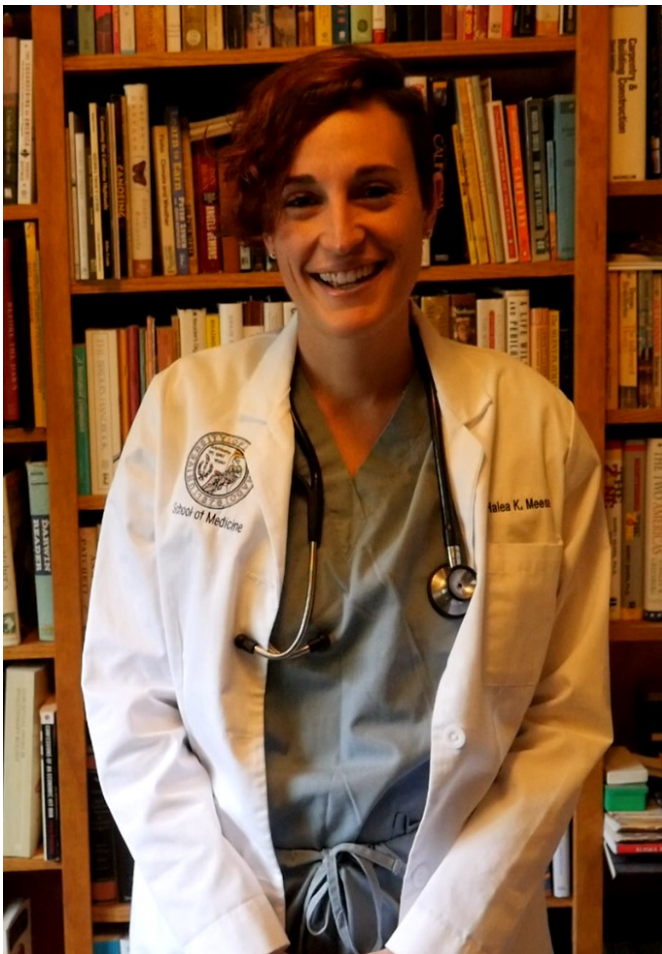
--August: Albuquerque Community Safety Department: The Right Response at the Right Time

Submitted by Jennifer Black

Thursday, August 11th, Noon Meeting: Voter Outreach in Clinical Settings—Opportunities and Limitations (Zoom only session)

Dr. Halea Meese will speak to us about voter outreach in clinical settings—both the opportunities and the limitations.

Dr. Meese is a Family Medicine Resident Physician at the University of New Mexico. Prior to moving to New Mexico, she served as the campaign lead for the Med Out the Vote campaign. While in residency, she has worked to pass voting access related policy at the American Medical Association. She also serves as an informal advisor for Vot-ER, a national non-



partisan organization that works to integrate voter education and registration into healthcare settings.

In the last decade, there has been growing recognition by the healthcare community that health disparities and health outcomes are related to social determinants of health. These determinants include socioeconomic status, access to food, housing, health care and health insurance, clean air, clean water, and many other factors. Review of data from a variety of sources demonstrates disparities in health outcomes and life expectancy related to county or zip code in the United States. Significant disparities in the rates of conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and kidney disease have been reported within cities in the United States. In New York City, data published in 2019 showed a 27-year gap in life expectancy across census tracts.

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August 11th (Thursday) Noon Meeting on Zoom, continued...

In New Mexico, the life expectancy for males at birth is 75.6 years, which is slightly lower than the US average of 76.3 years. The life expectancy for males by county ranges from 82.6 years in Los Alamos County to 70.8 years in McKinley and Rio Arriba Counties. Rates of chronic illnesses such as diabetes and asthma vary considerably between counties and across demographics.

The COVID-19 pandemic further illuminated these disparities when populations and communities with a larger burden of chronic illness experienced higher rates of hospitalization and death from the infection than those with better underlying health status. For health care systems and providers involved in the care of these people, there has been a growing interest in addressing some of the social determinants that impact the health of people in our communities.

Dr. Halea Meese, a resident physician in the UNM Department of Family and Community Medicine, will speak to us about one approach to addressing these issues through voter outreach and registration.

Dr. Meese recently co-authored an article in the *International Journal of Emergency Medicine* entitled “Health Care-Based voter registration: A New Kind of Healing”. In the article, the authors make a connection between voting and health status, as follows:

“The USA has a longstanding history of low voter registration and turnout compared to similar nations. Historically, the demographic groups that are disproportionately more likely to not be registered to vote are those most marginalized by our healthcare system. For example, a disproportionately large share of eligible Americans who were not registered in the 2016 Presidential election were people of color and low-income citizens. These are the same demographics who tend to be uninsured, underinsured, or suffer from chronic illnesses shaped by socioeconomic disadvantage. Furthermore, COVID-19 has exacerbated and exposed longstanding healthcare inequalities that disproportionately affect communities of color, the same communities that are less likely to be registered to vote. In other words, the

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August 11th (Thursday) Noon Meeting on Zoom, continued from page 8...

voices missing from the electorate are the same voices that could best inform needed changes to our health system. Therefore, regardless of party affiliation or stance on a particular policy, all physicians should agree that to be pro-voter participation is to be pro-democracy and pro-health.”

The National Voter Registration Act passed in 1993 permitted hospitals to conduct non-partisan voter education and registration activities at the same time that it permitted them at DMVs. Dr. Meese will address some of the ways that healthcare providers and clinics are actively engaged in encouraging voter participation.

In this session she will discuss:

1. The link between voting and health equity
2. What healthcare providers can and cannot do in the realm of voter registration
3. Healthcare provider voter outreach in New Mexico
4. National efforts enabling healthcare providers to engage their patients on voting

LWVCNM members and guests are invited to join the program remotely via Zoom. Zoom login information will be sent through upcoming Topics email announcements. We look forward to having you join us to discuss this important non-partisan voter registration effort in our community.

APD Forward Report on July 26th Federal Hearing: Consent Decree Progress for APD Use of Force

The July 26, 2022, Federal Hearing presided over by Judge Browning included testimony from parties to the Consent Decree (aka CASA, Court Approved Settlement Agreement) between the US Department of Justice (DOJ) and the City of Albuquerque (CABQ) due to Excessive Use of Force (UOF) by the Albuquerque Police Department. The July hearing considered the 15th Quarterly Independent Monitor's Report.

Judge Browning supervises Dr. James Ginger, Independent Monitor, and regularly convenes meetings to consider perspectives of:

- **US DOJ attorneys**, including HQ Civil Rights Division and US Attorney in New Mexico
- **CABQ officials and attorneys**
- **APD leadership and Albuquerque Police Officers Association** (APOA is party to the Collective Bargaining Agreement stipulating controls over aspects of CABQ authority)
- **Mental Health Response Advisory Committee** (MHRAC, appointed body evaluating the CABQ response to victims in mental health crisis)
- **Community Policing Councils** (CPCs – six in Albuquerque, one associated with each of the six APD Area Commands and staffed by volunteers)
- **Civilian Police Oversight Agency** (CPOA, Executive director and nine-member Force Review Board of City Council appointees investigating excessive use of force by APD and recommending discipline to APD Chief)
- **AMICI** (3 AMICI groups: McClendon Subclass representing Metropolitan Detention Center residents; Community Coalition representing underrepresented community residents, and APD Forward Coalition of nonprofit organizations, including LWVCNM).

The US Department of Justice (DOJ) remarked that both the CPCs and the MHRAC are successful elements in addressing concerns with community outreach and appropriate response/treatment when mental health issues are the primary cause of the CABQ call for response. DOJ was pleased that the number of completed use of force (UOF) investigations increased markedly during the IMR 15 reporting period (August 2021 – January 2022). Level 3 UOF investigations (Level 3 force could cause serious injury or death) completed in IMR 14 were zero. Thirty investigations were completed in IMR 15 with notable quality, accuracy, and timeliness. Delayed investigations sometimes exceed the deadline to apply discipline when charges of excessive UOF are sustained. The DOJ also expressed dismay that the CABQ Superintendent of Police Reform position remained vacant (That superintendent supervises both APD training and Internal Affairs investigations of police misconduct). However, Judge Browning remarked that the Superintendent position is not required by the Consent Decree. It was created by the City to better focus attention on deficiencies. The CPOA (Civilian Police Oversight Agency) is rebuilding, with six of nine positions filled. Prior vacancies resulted in the lack of a quorum to evaluate UOF investigation results so that delayed recommendations to the APD Chief for applying police officer discipline resulted where UOF charges were sustained. The City

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APD Forward Report on July 26th Federal Hearing, continued from page 10...

anticipated that complete compliance with all 276 measurable paragraphs of the CASA would be achieved within two years, followed by the required two-year maintenance period. The DOJ identified paragraphs from the CASA permitting suspension of monitoring paragraphs follow two years of compliance, and reassessment of the CASA when 40 per cent of the paragraphs are in compliance.

Independent Monitor Dr. Ginger stressed that filling the City's Superintendent of Police Reform position was vital to success. The External Force Investigation Team required by the DOJ Stipulated Order have successfully resolved many APD training and internal affairs issues (i.e., EFIT—experienced law enforcement officials training—and assisting APD Internal Affairs Investigators). APD training has improved markedly. During the IMR 15 reporting period no UOF investigations were added to the backlog. APD increased the number of investigations from 7 to 101 (100% of cases). EFIT assumes responsibility for the UOF investigation if the deadline is near, thereby ensuring no additions to the backlog. However, the EFIT team is very costly because travel to Albuquerque for 3-week rotations is routine protocol. Additionally, UOF incidents decreased from 80 cases during IMR #12 to 40 cases during IMR #15.

CABQ and APD have added a new Associate Chief Administrative Officer who previously served as both City Attorney and Director of the Bernalillo County Detention Center. The Superintendent of Police Reform will now report to this manager as an additional separation from the APD Chief. The Superintendent manages both the APD Training Academy and Internal Affairs, a major concern of the Independent Monitor and the DOJ. The City's goal is 1200 police officers. Staffing is now 885. Problems remain with high homicide rates and police officer recruiting and retention. APD receives 40,000 calls for service monthly with about 400 on-duty officers daily. The City's addition of a Director of Analytics will assist by evaluating status and shortcomings, and by focusing the City's attention on priorities. Thirty-one per cent of APD deficiencies are due to body cameras not being turned on or not downloaded timely. New software will automatically perform both of these functions. Also, discipline by the Area Commands is inconsistent. The UOF investigation backlog was attributed to a lack of staffing. The addition of 14 civilian employees to supplement sworn police officers has resulted in 29 IA investigators; 25 are required.

CPOA staffing has increased. Six of the nine positions have been filled. A new Executive Director was hired recently. CPOA indicated that APD redacting of officer identification sometimes resulted in a six-month delay in recommending police officer discipline. This is past the deadline. The CPOA also discussed burdensome training requirements for these volunteer positions, including the twelve-week Civilian Police Academy, which is scheduled for three hours per evening for two weekday evenings. The CPOA has requested that the City Council decrease these training requirements.

Submitted by Karen Douglas



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The League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico, a tax-exempt 501 (c) (3) organization is a nonpartisan political organization, that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy by education and advocacy.

APPLICATION FOR LEAGUE MEMBERSHIP

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____ PHONE: _____

Mail above information to LWVCNM, 6739 Academy Rd. NE, Suite 124, Albuquerque, NM 87109, along with annual dues as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| First member of household | \$65 |
| Each additional member of household | \$33 |
| Student member (proof required) | No Charge |