

The VOTER

AUGUST 2023

VOL 88, NO.8

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF CENTRAL NEW MEXICO

6739 Academy Rd. NE Suite 124, Albuquerque, NM 87109 lwvcnm.org (505) 884-8441

LWVCNM Updates & Happenings Jennifer Black

IN APPRECIATION

A special thank you to Trish Lopez for coordinating and moderating the exceptional panel on the New Mexico correctional system, including inmates' conditions, sentencing, recidivism rates and initiatives for improvement on Thursday, July 13. While an hour was barely enough time to cover this weighty topic, the panelists Justin Allen and Douglas Carver provided moving experiences, important facts, and personal/professional commentary. With 17 participants on Zoom and 27 in-person members and guests at the LWVCNM Office Conference Room, there were many questions for the panelists, as well as experiences shared by audience members touched by family experiences with correctional systems. If you missed the program, a recording is available at:

<https://www.lwvcnm.org/zoom-meeting-recordings/>

IT'S ALL ABOUT PLANNING

On Saturday, June 10, 10 AM--Noon, sixteen LWVCNM members met via Zoom to outline the educational program year (September 2023-August 2024). In an effort to delve deeper into topics of interest, we will host several two-part programs in the upcoming year and also offer occasional evening programs to better accommodate our working members.

Monthly Educational Meetings: Proposed Program Topics

Please note: As new issues arise through the course of the year or a proposed speaker is not available, topics may change.

September: Albuquerque Community Safety Department: The Right Response at the Right Time

October: Municipal Elections 2023, Part One: The Issues

November: Municipal Elections 2023, Part Two: The Answers

December: Clean Energy Options – Should LWV include Commercial Nuclear Power? In-depth Exploration of the Nuclear Study

January: A Place to Call Home When You Don't Have One, Can't Afford One, or Can't Find One: Affordable Housing/Homelessness and Regional Plans to Address the Issue, Part One

- February:** A Place to Call Home When You Don't Have One, Can't Afford One, or Can't Find One: Affordable Housing/Homelessness and Regional Plans to Address the Issue, Part Two
- March:** Let the Sunshine In: Ethics and Government Transparency
- April:** Earth Day Month: Focus on a Climate/Environmental/Sustainability Issue
- May:** Annual Meeting, Keynote Speaker TBD
- June:** Democracy in Danger, Part One: LBGTQ Community and Rights Under Fire
- July:** Democracy in Danger, Part 2: A Deep Dive into the Challenges to Democracy
- August:** Summer Break! No program

Watch for information about special events and programs: Social Meet-Ups, Holiday Open House, Women's History Month and Women's Equality Day Celebrations.



SEPTEMBER EDUCATIONAL MEETING

Join us for the **Brown Bag LUNCH & LEARN Series**

THURSDAY, September 14, Noon—1 PM

What: The Albuquerque Community Safety Department (ACS) is a new alternative response model gaining national attention, garnering recent coverage by NPR, the Washington Post, NBC and other national media outlets. ACS is one of the first of its kind. As a cabinet-level department, it is the third branch of public safety, meaning it is on equal footing with the police and fire departments. ACS addresses calls involving mental health, homelessness, substance use, and other issues that do not require a paramedic or police officer. Calls are triaged by 911 and 311 operators, ensuring ACS's calls are non-medical and non-violent. **Note:** *As discussed, the July and September programs are excellent tandem programs addressing important issues related to crime and how a mental health perspective can help strengthen the response to issues feeding into the criminal justice system.*

Who: TBD/Representative from ACS

When: Thursday, September 14th @ Noon—1 PM

In-Person RSVP appreciated: lunch@lwvcnm.org or 505-881-8441

Where:

- LWVCNM Conference Room, 6739 Academy Road NE (ample lot parking)
- In-person and via Zoom/Watch for the Topics announcement with Zoom login information.
- Attendees are invited to bring a brown bag lunch
- The LWVCNM Board will host light refreshments after the program



NEW! LWVCNM BOOK CLUB

The inaugural meeting of the LWVCNM Book Club was held on June 27. The thirteen attendees discussed *Evicted – Poverty and Profit in The American City* by Matthew Desmond.

In addition to discussing the book, the group made decisions on future book club events:

Date: August 30, 2023 (Wednesday)

Time: 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Location: LWVCNM Office Conference Room

Title: *The Soul of America – The Battle for our Better Angels* by Pulitzer Prize Winner Jon Meacham.

As described on the book jacket, "...Jon Meacham helps us understand the present moment in America by looking back at critical times in our history when hope overcame division and fear."

Date: October 25, 2023 (Wednesday)

Time: 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Location: LWVCNM Office Conference Room

Title: *The Persuaders – At the Front Lines of the Fight for Hearts, Minds, and Democracy* by best-selling author Anand Giridharadas

As described on the author's website, "The *Persuaders* is a stunning insider account of activists, politicians, educators, and everyday citizens who are on the ground working to change minds, bridge divisions, and fight for democracy. "

Join Book Club coordinators, Janet Kirkpatrick, Mary Mulvany, and Laura Downing, for lively discussion and conversation.

Bring along a "potluck" snack--something sweet or savory--to share with the group (*not required; just if you have the time*).

Please RSVP to Janet via phone or text at 505-401-2052.

League Archive Material in New Exhibit at the Albuquerque Museum

-Karen Wentworth

A new exhibit scheduled to go on display on August 12 at the Albuquerque Museum will use items from the Central New Mexico League archives.

The title of the exhibit is "News for the People: Local Journalism the 1970's and Beyond."

The exhibit will run through March 3, 2024.

The exhibit contains Voter Guides that local newspapers printed in conjunction with the League, and leaflets in English and Spanish that League members created to help new mothers with day care questions.

Central New Mexico League archives will soon be available at the Center for Southwest Research at Zimmerman Library at the University of New Mexico.



Jan Bray, a devoted and impassioned LWVCNM Lifetime member, passed away on July 24, 2023. She was among the LWVCNM Lifetime members recognized during the LWV 100th Birthday Party February 15, 2020.

Jan Bray was given a gift membership to LWV for her 21st Birthday from her mother who had been a longtime LWV member in Minneapolis. Jan was then attending Lake Erie College in Ohio, where she majored in Education. Jan later returned to MN and attended the University of MN, where she earned a Master of Arts degree in Public Policy and met her future husband, Olin Bray, also a life-long member of LWV. Jan's favorite LWV projects were participation in studies, with involvement in a Human Needs State Study in MN being particularly memorable. Jan pursued lobbying in support of basic human needs following the formulation of this MN LWV position. Jan also served as a Unit Leader in MN more than 30 years ago. Jan's employment experience included serving as a

classroom aide in MN with tutoring of individual middle and high school students in areas requiring assistance. Following Jan and Olin's move to NM 31 years ago, Jan served as a lobbyist for AAUW in addition to their continuing mutual LWV involvement.

Jan and Olin served as LWVCNM Co-Presidents 2009 – 2011 and following their service both continued to be involved in LWV efforts. Jan and Olin also enjoyed their participation in the Great Decisions in Foreign Policy committee, continuing to attend regular meetings, and both were regular participants in the Albuquerque International Association. Olin preceded Jan in death May 22, 2019.

There will be a memorial service for Jan Bray at La Vida Llena, 10501 Lagrima de Oro NE, on August 11th at 10:00 am.

LWVCNM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President:
Donna Sandoval

1st Co-Vice Presidents/Vote411.org:
Karen Wentworth & Lani Desaulniers

2nd Vice President/Membership:
Elizabeth Shields

3rd Vice President/Program:
Jennifer Black

4th Co-Vice Presidents/Development:
Betsy Carlson & Mary Mulvany

Treasurer: Donna Sandoval

Secretary: Vivian Skadron

Voter Services Chair: Gina Mahfouz

Voter Guide Distribution: Lani Desaulniers

Sustainability/Climate Change:
Jeanne Logsdon

Office Manager/Webmaster/Zoom Host:
Starlyn Brown

Advocacy Team/Observer Corps:
Karen Wentworth

Directors
Terry Quinn & Lindsey Ritcher

Event and Volunteer Coordinator
Linda Miller

Program
Karen Douglas

LWVCNM CALENDAR

August 10th (Thursday) NOON – 1 PM

NO MEETING - Summer Break!
See you in September!

September 14th (Thursday) NOON- 1 PM

LWVCNM Monthly meeting,
In-person & via Zoom

TOPIC: Albuquerque Community Safety
Department: The Right Response at the
Right Time

Proposed Speaker: TBD/ACS Representative

Thursday, October 12, Noon-1 PM

October and November will be a two part
series: Municipal Elections 2023,
Issues and Answers

Topic/Title: Municipal Elections 2023, Part
One: The Issues

General Overview of upcoming elections and the
major issues facing the electorate.

Proposed Speaker: Dr. Timothy Krebs

OBSERVER REPORTS



Observer Corps Report – Albuquerque City Council meeting

21 June 2023 (The City Council does not meet during July)

Mary Mulvany /Janet Kirkpatrick

Middle Rio Grande Housing Collaborative – Update.

The City Council voted eight to one to approve the Joint Powers Agreement between the City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County establishing the Middle Rio Grande Housing Collaborative. Voting for: Benton, Davis, Fiebelkorn, Grout, Jones, Lewis, Pena, Sanchez; voting against: Bassan. The mayor signed it on June 30.

[R-23-144 Text](#)

Housing

O-22-54. The City Council voted to amend the Integrated Development Ordinance (IDO) to allow casitas in R-1 zoned residential areas. The ordinance passed by a five to four vote. Voting for: Benton, Davis, Fiebelkorn, Jones, Pena; voting against: Bassan, Grout, Lewis, Sanchez. This ordinance includes proposed zoning changes as part of the Housing Forward Initiative. Public comment included 14 speakers in support of the IDO change, citing the need for affordable housing. Six people spoke against the change stating that it has not been thoroughly considered or would change the character of neighborhoods. [O-22-54 Text](#)

Seven speakers representing NaeVa (formerly Native American Voters Alliance Education Project) spoke against a planned development of a 348-unit, three story housing development at the base of Petroglyphs National Monument. The speakers acknowledged the need for additional housing, but expressed concern over a lack of consultation with tribes and pueblos.

Change to City Council/City Manager Government Format

P-23-1. Proposition to place on the November 2023 ballot a change to the city's form of government from a city council/mayor format to a city council/city manager format. This proposition failed to pass on a three to six vote. Voting for: Grout, Lewis, Sanchez. Voting against: Bassan, Benton, Davis, Fiebelkorn, Davis, Jones, Pena.

During the public comment period three individuals spoke in favor of putting the proposition on the ballot, four spoke against it. Two of the speakers against the proposition represented unions and stated that they would rather bargain with an executive with authority and accountability.

Professor Krebs of the UNM Political Science Department reiterated the points he made during the June 5 City Council meeting. He presented research that indicates the city council/mayor form of government has greater citizen engagement and more minority voter participation than the city

council/city manager form of government. During the professor’s discussion he was asked to clarify if he was paid by the city administration to present his research. He indicated that he was paid which sparked concern among the council members because they had been informed by the city administration that he was not paid by the city.

Another speaker was David Campbell, who identified himself as former CAO/City Manager City of Albuquerque, former City Manager of Rio Rancho, former Albuquerque City Attorney and Planning Director. He spoke “in favor of government reform”, identifying this as an opportune time to consider city/county unification or consolidation. Three council members (Bassan, Davis, and Benton) stated they were open to further exploring city/county consolidation. [P-23-1 Text](#)



Observer Corps Report – Bernalillo County Commission

AUGUST 2023

Karen Wentworth

Bernalillo County Commission Discusses City/County Consolidation

Maybe it is just wishful thinking, but the Bernalillo County Commission is discussing the possibility of consolidating the governmental operations of the City of Albuquerque and the County of Bernalillo. In the past, voters in the county have soundly defeated the idea every time it is put to the vote. But in practical terms the city and county have been slowly merging operations for years.

Combined Operations

Albuquerque/Bernalillo Public Libraries
Water Utility Authority – drinking water/sewage
Emergency Operations Center
Environmental Health/Air Quality
Landfill

Separate operations

Metropolitan Detention Center (county)
Albuquerque Police (city)
Sheriff’s Dept. (county)
Parks (city/county)
Community Centers (city/county)
Fire Departments (city/county)
Trash Removal (city/county)
Planning & Zoning (city/county)

Both the city and county maintain separate emergency dispatch (911) centers, and the county regularly acts as backup to the city dispatch center. Talks of merger are ongoing.

The League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico has supported city/county consolidation since 1948. It was one of the first positions taken by the fledgling league.



Observer Report - Sandoval County Commission regular meeting

June 28, 2023

Mary Templeton, (by online audio; video is unavailable)

Present: David Heil (Chair), Michael Meek (Vice Chair), Katherine Bruch, Jay Block, Joshua Jones

Description of Issues Relevant to the League

Drug & Alcohol Treatment

The Desert Mountain Healing out-patient drug rehabilitation center requested funding from the County. The center frequently treats people released from County detention. The center currently can only provide assistance to patients who have or can obtain Medicaid. The Commission requested additional information and offered to pursue possible sources of funding. One commissioner expressed his wish that “we could just kill every single drug dealer because...that would make this country better” (<https://sandovalcountynm.new.swagit.com/videos/258041> 28:52).

Climate Change Action

The commission unanimously adopted a resolution declaring intent to issue up to \$275 million in industrial revenue bonds on behalf of NMRD Data Center III to develop a PNM solar farm in Sandoval County. In compliance with section 4-59-4 of NMSA 1978, Rio Rancho Schools would receive funds in lieu of the land tax payments deferred for the solar farm.

Additional Comments

Commissioners Discussion

A Commissioner claimed that gender-inclusive bathrooms lead to rape of young girls, and that participants in Pride parades expose themselves to children.

Sandoval County Commission Website

<https://www.sandovalcountynm.gov/commission/>



Observer Corps Report, July 10, 2023

APS Board of Education meetings, 7 and 21 June, 2023

Laura J. Downing (downinglauraj@gmail.com)

I “attend” the YouTube live stream of the meetings, and I report on topics most relevant to LWVCNM policy positions.

The Public Forum on 7 June included 21 members of the public. No one signed up for the 21 June public forum. Issues raised include: a new early start time for elementary school students at Bandelier ES. Several parents raised this problem and complained about lack of community involvement in making the change. The owner of Two Steps Ahead Child Care center and several parents complained

that the center was shut down abruptly with no explanation and no replacement facility offered. The complaints focused on the lack of community involvement and lack of transparency in deciding to close the facility. The issue that drew the most public comment was the recent APS decision to permanently expel students who provoke violent incidents on school campuses, especially ones involving guns: <https://www.koat.com/article/albuquerque-public-schools-expulsion-guns/44133291>.

A couple of mothers of children affected by school violence spoke out in favor, but the vast majority of those commenting at the public forum, many of them youth or parent organizers, spoke out in favor of other approaches: for example, restorative justice, violence prevention policies, parental accountability. Many noted that the permanent expulsion policy is likely to be implemented most strictly towards students of color and students with cognitive disabilities, increasing educational inequities in the APS system and violating the Yazzie-Martinez agreement.

The Board meetings proper continued to be dominated by detailed discussion of finalizing the strategic five-year plan for APS in order to satisfy the settlement requirements of the Yazzie-Martinez lawsuit, which addressed inequities faced by certain groups of students – in fact, the vast majority of students – in the New Mexico public school system: <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/yazzie-martinez-updates/> . The current version of the Goals and Guardrails that have been put in place to address these issues can be found at this link: <https://www.aps.edu/about-us/board/aps-goals-and-guardrails>. Next steps include a focus on community engagement, on improved teacher training and on monitoring how well goals are being met in the coming school year. The Board will receive training on the monitoring process.

An issue discussed at length at both meetings concerned right-sizing (i.e., down-sizing) schools in the face of dropping enrollments. Indeed, right-sizing as a way to address lower resources as the result of lower enrollments led some Board members to question even routine funding measures like a capital improvement tax needed to support current facilities before right-sizing is completed. There was also a lengthy discussion as to whether to fund a new Early Child Center in the face of right-sizing, even though the legislature has just passed a law making pre-K education a right and a mandate for APS. It is a concern how to meet right-sizing goals while also meeting early childhood education requirements and providing adequate support for dual language programs.

At the 7 June meeting it was announced that Scott Elder will be stepping down as Superintendent of the APS when his contract ends on 30 June 2024. At the 21 June meeting, an update was given on the search process for a new Superintendent. The goal is to name a new Superintendent by spring 2024. Community feedback will be sought in formulating the position announcement, and a search firm will be used to find qualified candidates.

Other New Mexico League Activities

LWVLA Pit Production Study 2023 - Jody Benson

Should large scale pit production for nuclear weapons occur in Los Alamos?

Scope

1. Background information
 - a. Explain/define pits and how they are used for nuclear weapons.
 - b. Where were the former pit factories and why was the production discontinued there?
 - c. What is the current plan for pit production?
2. Does the county need to build new pits?
 - a. Evidence pro and con that the existing weapons are not viable.
 - b. Are they needed for new weapons?
 - c. Effect of production on national security – pro (deterrence) and con (increased tension).
3. If new pits are needed, why build them in Los Alamos?
 - a. Why not build them at Pantex?
 - b. Advantages (jobs, federal dollars) and disadvantages (safety and environmental issues) of building them in Los Alamos.

Study approved 18-6 Ballot Vote LWVLA Annual Meeting

LWVSNM AFFORDABLE HOUSING 2023 - Kathleen Kanim Co-President, LWVSNM

“Continue to monitor the activities of affordable housing providers in the community, advocate for increases in the amount of such housing including working to identify funding sources, lobby for appropriate changes in city ordinances, and educate the public about affordable housing issues.”

Zoning, Sustainability, and Veterans Housing are elements of this effort.

Affordable Housing is chaired by League member Beth Bardwell.

Public Health Study Update - May 2023 - LWVSFC

At our Annual Meeting last month, we adopted a two-year local study on public health, technically an update of our existing position, which addresses only government funding of health care for medically indigent.

The LWVNM position is more comprehensive; however, it does not define the components of public health as currently recognized or state what the League supports or opposes in relation to such components. Our local governments are currently grappling with such issues, leading the Action and Advocacy Committee to recognize the need for a more comprehensive position from which to advocate.

We already have nine volunteers, including two co-chairs, eager to work on this study and could add a few more if there is interest. We intend to conduct research on public health as currently defined in the professional communities; government responsibilities in these areas, including promoting what improves public health outcomes and opposing what worsens these outcomes; related social services; and prevention care coordination. We intend to recognize the ping-pong between hospital and jail, as

(cont.)

well as needed interventions. We will also address needed resources, including financial, infrastructure, and human/professional resources, as well as intergovernmental cooperation. Our research will include the study of best practices in other communities as well as interviews with local resources.

We will provide periodic updates in the Voter and produce papers addressing the issues listed above. We will hold at least one general meeting to update the membership and seek feedback, probably at about the halfway mark. From our research, and in accordance with national and state League guidelines, we will propose consensus questions with accompanying pros and cons; once the board approves them, we will hold (a) consensus meeting(s) and develop a proposed position from the outcomes. After board adoption, the position will be available to use for advocacy. It will be included in the local program for approval by the membership at the next annual meeting, probably in 2025.

Our kickoff meeting will be scheduled soon and you will be given notice. Our meetings will be open to members and we will welcome your input at any time, the sooner the better!

Jody Larson
Co-Chair, LWVSFC Public Health Study



Volunteer Opportunities

Because Democracy is not a Spectator Sport...

We need your skills, your enthusiasm, and your commitment to the myriad of projects always underway. From simple clerical tasks to grass roots advocacy, ongoing or project-by project, we can fit your interests to a volunteer job. Expanding our volunteer base is a top priority of LWVCNM.

How to Find Out More About Volunteering?

It's easy: Contact us at 505-884-8441 or lwcnmoffice@gmail.com Leave a message with your name/phone number and expressing your interest in finding out more about volunteering. We will contact you to match your interests/skills with a volunteer position, explain tasks involved, review time commitment for various positions, and offer training where needed.

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.

