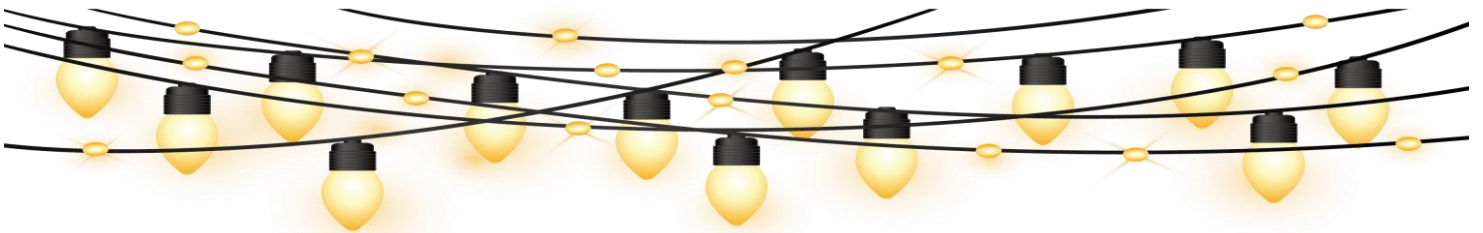


# The VOTER

NOVEMBER 2023

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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF CENTRAL NEW MEXICO  
6739 Academy Rd. NE Suite 124, Albuquerque, NM 87109    lwvcnm.org    (505) 884-8441



*Celebrate the Season !  
Holiday Open House  
Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2 - 4 PM*

*However you celebrate the busy holiday season, take a quiet breather and enjoy an afternoon with League friends and colleagues.*

*Join us for a holiday celebration at the home of LWVCNM President Donna Sandoval, 6729 Promenade Ave. NE, Albuquerque*

*There will be light refreshments, conversation, and an opportunity to share our latest accomplishments, news and plans for the future!*



*RSVP: Liz Shields 559-578-5670 or*  
[elizs44@yahoo.com](mailto:elizs44@yahoo.com)



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

### **NOVEMBER EDUCATIONAL MEETING**

**WHEN:** Thursday, NOVEMBER 9, Noon-1 PM

**WHERE:** In-person/Zoom, LWVCNM Conference Room, 6739 Academy Road NE (ample lot parking)

**TOPIC:** Municipal Elections 2023, Part Two: The Answers

**Speaker:** Secretary of State, Maggie Toulouse Oliver

**WHAT:** Just two days post-election, all the answers may not be available yet. An analysis of available results and how they may foreshadow the 2024 general elections is a possible topic.

Our November program meeting speaker, Maggie Toulouse Oliver, New Mexico Secretary of State since 2016, has been involved in politics and public policy for over two decades and has made public service the focus of her career. Her work has focused on increasing voter access, running efficient, secure, and fair elections, and bringing more transparency and increased ethical standards to government. Secretary Toulouse Oliver will talk to the LWVCNM members about the turn-out for the recent municipal elections and a look forward to the 2024 elections.

Since becoming Secretary of State, she has implemented increased transparency rules for financial disclosure and campaign finance reporting, modernized the online campaign finance system, helped craft and pass good government legislation like same-day voter registration, automated voter registration, and the state's newly formed Ethics Commission.



In addition to her elected position, Secretary Toulouse Oliver is the immediate Past President of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), and has previously served NASS as President, President-Elect, Treasurer, and chair of the elections committee. She serves as a board member of New Mexico's Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA), the New Mexico Martin Luther King Jr. Commission, and the state Commission on Records and Archives. She is currently a member of the University of Southern California Annenberg Center's Voter Communication task force, and an advisory board member for the Election Official Legal Defense Network co-founded by national election law experts Benjamin Ginsburg and Bob Bauer.

She is also a Ph.D. Student in Political Science at the University of New Mexico and is a W.K. Kellogg Foundation Community Leadership Network Fellowship alumna. Most importantly, she is the proud mother of two sons, Christian and Max.

#### **PROGRAM DETAILS:**

- 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
- Stay for a social gathering after the program with light refreshments hosted by LWVCNM Board
- In-Person RSVP appreciated: [lunch@lwvcnm.org](mailto:lunch@lwvcnm.org) or 505-881-8441

## Looking towards December . . .

Thursday, December 14, both Noon-1PM and 6:30-7:30 PM are proposed

**Topic/Title:** Clean Energy Options – Should LWV Include Commercial Nuclear Power?  
In-depth Exploration of the Nuclear Study

**Proposed Speakers:** LWVNM Nuclear Study Task Leaders Panel

**Coordinator:** Karen Douglas

We hope to host the meeting twice on December 14 (afternoon and evening) in an effort to reach as many members as possible for this important overview of the fast-tracked nuclear study/position. The study materials will all be available in November, which will allow members to familiarize themselves with the topic before the December 14 meeting and December Consensus meetings. Please see the article below for further info.

### **LWV seeks Member Involvement for Reconsideration Of LWVUS Nuclear Issues Position**

The LWVNM Nuclear Issues Committee will educate and engage members in December.

The LWV Nuclear Issues Study was approved during the April 2023 LWVNM Convention. The Convention authorized four tasks for further study, revisiting the LWVUS Position “opposing increased reliance on nuclear fission” for response to the international Climate Emergency. Task study reports, references, and expert interviews will be posted to LWVNM Nuclear Issues Google Drive during November 2023 and all LWVNM members will be invited to evaluate the information.

The Thursday, December 14<sup>th</sup> Zoom meeting will be offered two times (12N and 6pm) and will feature Task Leaders discussing study results and responding to member inquiries. LWVNM Consensus meetings will follow Saturday December 16<sup>th</sup> and one December weeknight to engage all interested members (Consensus meeting reports are the foundation of LWV Positions, so every member is encouraged to participate in one of the two December 2023 Consensus meetings). Please review the Fall 2023 La Palabra article and upcoming December 2023 Voter for more details.

## **LWVCNM BOOK CLUB**

*The book club will resume next year January 31, 2024 (Wednesday)  
with a TBA book on the topic of environment and climate change.*



## VOTE411.org is Now Live – and what is happening to neighborhood democracy? - from Karen Wentworth

The League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico online voter guide at VOTE411.org is now live and ready for voters. [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org) asks for your address and uses that information to show you precisely what you will see on your ballot.

The League's dilemma has been with our very curious voters. Many voters want to see everything that is on the ballot, whether they can vote for the candidates or not. In response to this demand, Voter Guide volunteers have also created a series of PDF's with detailed information on all area candidates, bond issues and Albuquerque Public Schools Mill Levies. If you want to know about EVERYTHING on the ballot, go to the Voter & Election Information page at [lwvcnm.org](http://lwvcnm.org) and select the county of interest.

There is something troubling happening to democracy at the very local level in this election. Bernalillo County has 55 races on the ballot. In 22 of them no candidates at all have filed to run. Sandoval County has 55 races. In 15 of them, no candidates filed to run.

These races are all in local Public Improvement Districts. The districts are in developing areas of the county, on the west side, in Mesa del Sol, or in new subdivisions in Sandoval County. They are for small boards that have the power to levy property taxes for bonds to do very local improvements, like roads within a subdivision, or culverts over an arroyo, or parks. The problem is the job is both thankless and boring, and no one wants to run.

So, when a district has no local residents interested in serving on a Public Improvement District board, the city appoints people from outside the neighborhood or city employees to represent people from these neighborhoods.

This is evidence of a system that is not working. When we see this many vacancies, and this little interest from voters in their own neighborhood, it means democracy is crumbling at the neighborhood level. The media spends a lot of time worrying about problems at the top of the ballot, but the problems at the bottom are also important.

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### IN MEMORIAM



We are sorry to note the passing of Geta Aileen Gatterman, 90, who served in the leadership of the League in Albuquerque and at the state level in the 1980s. She is remembered as a very active member and leader and was particularly interested in environmental and land use issues. She served on numerous civic committees including the BernCo Planning Commission and the Consumer Advisory Committee for the city's San Juan Chama Project, the latter leading to her employment as assistant to the US District Court's Special Master for water adjudication cases for five northern New Mexico rivers for 9 years.

She had been less active for the past several years, but she was one of the generations of women who have helped to keep our League strong and involved in the local community.

Donations in her honor can be made to the JoAnne Ramponi Fund at the League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico [donation page](#).



## **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:**  
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Karen Wentworth

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Terry Quinn & Lindsey Ritcher

**Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator**  
Linda Miller

**Program**  
Karen Douglas

If you need help with Zoom,  
please reach out to Zoom host, Starlyn Brown,  
[sbrown@unm.edu](mailto:sbrown@unm.edu)

Please submit your articles for the monthly Voter by the  
15th of each month to Michal Mudd at:  
[VoterEditorMichal@gmail.com](mailto:VoterEditorMichal@gmail.com)

## **LWVCNM CALENDAR**

November 2<sup>nd</sup> (always first Thursday) 5:30 pm  
LWVCNM Board Meeting, Hybrid LWVCNM office  
conference room/ZOOM. All members welcome.

**November 7<sup>th</sup> – ELECTION DAY**

November 9<sup>th</sup> (THURSDAY) NOON - 1 PM

**LWVCNM Monthly meeting,  
In-person & via Zoom**

**Topic: Municipal Elections 2023, Part Two: The  
Answers with Speaker: Maggie Toulouse Oliver,  
New Mexico Secretary of State**

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**NO Happy Hour or Book Club in November**

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Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2 – 4 PM

**Holiday Open House Gathering  
@ home of Donna Sandoval,  
6729 Promenade Ave. NE  
See p.1 for details to RSVP**

December 7<sup>th</sup>, (always first Thursday) 5:30 pm  
LWVCNM Board Meeting, Hybrid LWVCNM office  
conference room/ZOOM. All members welcome.

December 14<sup>th</sup> (THURSDAY) 12 - 1 PM & 6 – 7 pm

**LWVCNM Monthly meeting,  
In-person & via Zoom**

**Topic: Clean Energy Options – Should LWV Include  
Commercial Nuclear Power? An In-depth Exploration of  
the Nuclear Study, organized by Karen Douglas.  
The Zoom meeting will be offered two times (12N and  
6pm) and will feature Task Leaders discussing study  
results and responding to member inquiries. See article  
on p. 2 for further info.**



**Observer Corps Report – Albuquerque City Council meeting  
September 18, 2023 and October 2, 2023  
Mary Mulvany / Janet Kirkpatrick**

All nine councilors were present at the September 18 and the October 2 meetings: Louie Sanchez – District 1, Isaac Benton – District 2, Klarissa Peña – District 3, Brook Bassan – District 4, Dan Lewis – District 5, Pat Davis – District 6, Tammy Fiebelkorn – District 7, Trudy Jones – District 8, Renée Grout, District 9.

**Affordable Housing**

At the September 18 meeting Department of Health, Housing and Homelessness (formerly Family and Community Services) Deputy Director Joseph Montoya gave a presentation on city expenditures on housing programs, housing development, and the plan to address Albuquerque’s housing shortage. There were 31 projects for which \$71.6 million was city investment, resulting in creation of 2224 units, 1021 of which were considered “affordable.” The city’s affordable housing plan has a goal of an additional 5,000 affordable units. Among other efforts, the city will leverage external funds, open projects to for-profit developers, create funding packages for developers, and create a list of previous tax credit projects losing affordability. The presentation occurs at the 25:07 minute mark of the September 18 Council meeting recording: [Housing Presentation](#)

**Gibson Health Hub/Gateway Center Lease**

At the September 18 meeting the council voted unanimously to amend the agreement between the city and Vizionz-Sankofa for use of space at the Gateway Center. The amendment allows for performance of services in lieu of cash rent. The tenant, Vizionz-Sakofa, established an International District Family Resource Center providing social services. Further, the tenant will offer services and support to the Gibson Health Hub and the Gateway Center. Questions from Councilor Grout elicited the city’s explanation for the requested amendment: when the tenant originally signed the lease, they planned to pay rent out of funding they received. It was later learned the funding requirements stipulate it cannot be used for rent. [EC-23-341](#)

**Fleet Electrification**

During the October 2 meeting’s Question and Answer period Council Fiebelkorn noted that the city’s General Services Department (GSD) does not appear to be in compliance with the city’s Fleet Electrification policy. The policy provides that when replacing vehicles, the city will purchase electric vehicles unless a written justification has been submitted and approved by the Fleet Review Committee. The General Services Department advised the councilor that since the policy was implemented, they have purchased 193 vehicles of which 2 were electric. The administration responded that these numbers may not reflect all departments because some do not purchase through GSD. However, the administration’s representative concurred that the policy implementation needs improvement.

## **Open Space General Bond Funding**

On October 2 the council voted to increase the amount of general bond funding designated for open space from 2.5% to 3%. The funding is designated for purchase of additional land and for capital improvement. The measure passed by an eight to one vote. Voting for: Benton, Davis, Fiebelkorn, Grout, Jones, Lewis, Peña, Sanchez. Voting against: Bassan. [O-23-83](#)

## **Transit**

At the October 2 meeting the council voted to direct the Transit Department and Rio Metro Regional Transit District to study the potential consolidation of ABQ Ride and Rio Metro and to fund the study. Rio Metro includes the Railrunner and some feeder shuttles. The measure passed by a seven to two vote. Voting for: Benton, Davis, Fiebelkorn, Grout, Jones, Lewis, Sanchez. Voting against: Bassan and Peña. [R-23-163](#)

## **Affirming Right to Keep and Bear Arms**

At the October 2 meeting the council voted to affirm the right to keep and bear arms and to urge the governor to take no actions that violate constitutional rights. The vote passed by a five to four vote. Voting for: Bassan, Grout, Jones, Lewis, Sanchez. Voting against: Benton, Davis, Fiebelkorn, Peña. [R-23-171](#)



## **Observer Corps Report – Bernalillo County Commission**

**November 2023**

**Karen Wentworth**

## **Bernalillo County Commission Listening to Constituent Concerns**

Commissioner Walt Benson has pulled his proposed change to the Transparency Portal Ordinance off the county's current agenda. He reached out to ask about our concerns and we had a telephone conversation about his proposed changes.

You may remember we sent a letter to the commission saying their proposed language change to allow the county to remove contract information from the portal at their discretion posed problems for citizens who legitimately sought information about contracts.

Bernalillo County's ongoing efforts to scrub information from their website stems from the ransomware attack last year that shut down the county's servers for two weeks. The county, working with the FBI, was eventually able to unlock their servers, but the county is increasingly cautious about the information it posts on the website.

Benson says he is reworking the language for the changes to the transparency portal. We will have more on this as the county moves forward.



## Sandoval County Commission regular meeting

September 13, 2023

Mary Templeton, observer (via video)

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

### Description of Issues Relevant to the League

#### Gun Safety

**As background**, the LWV holds the following advocacy positions regarding gun safety:

- LWVUS: "Protect the health and safety of citizens by limiting accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic weapons. Support regulation of firearms for consumer safety."
- LWVNM: "LWVNM supports regulation of firearms for public safety."

Of the Governor's 30-day ban on open and concealed carry laws in Bernalillo County with certain exceptions, Sheriff Jesse James Casaus remarked, "...we don't entertain that nonsense here in Sandoval County... I encourage you guys, when you're passing through Bernalillo County, Albuquerque, be armed... law enforcement police are not there in the moment for your safety. You need to be responsible for... your own safety."

(<https://sandovalcountynm.new.swagit.com/videos/271569> 04:00-5:05)

Also on the topic of gun safety, a bond obligation question on the November 2023 ballot would provide funds to install an Evolve weapons detection system (or similar) and related infrastructure upgrades at Rio Rancho High, Cleveland High and Lincoln Middle Schools.

#### Education

In October, the Rio Rancho Public Schools (RRPS) will break ground on a joint RRPS/CNM Career Technical Education Center to open in 2025.

#### Health Care

Last year, UNM Sandoval Regional Medical Center (SRMC) received federal funding in the form of a SAMHSA grant to develop, implement, and test a model of tele-health substance use disorder treatment to reach underserved rural Hispanic and Native American populations in Sandoval and other counties. The hospital received an extension of this grant for the following year.

#### Voting Rights and Health Care

*A Resolution Supporting Referendum Petitions on Bills Passed by the 2023 Legislature* passed by a vote of 3 to 1 along party lines. (See link at

[https://destinyhosted.com/agenda\\_publish.cfm?id=72636&mt=ALL&vl=true&get\\_month=9&get\\_year=2023&dsp=agm&seq=2788&rev=0&ag=397&ln=12426&nseq=2791&nrev=0&pseq=&prev=&vl=true#](https://destinyhosted.com/agenda_publish.cfm?id=72636&mt=ALL&vl=true&get_month=9&get_year=2023&dsp=agm&seq=2788&rev=0&ag=397&ln=12426&nseq=2791&nrev=0&pseq=&prev=&vl=true#)

for full text of the Resolution.)



**As background**, state bills listed for referendum include:

- HB 4 – Voting Rights Protections
- HB 7 – Reproductive and Gender-Affirming HealthCare Freedom Act
- HB 207 – Expand Human Rights Act
- SB 13 – Reproductive Health Provider Protections
- SB 180 – Election Changes
- SB 397 – School-based Health Centers

The New Mexico Secretary of State has published a *Notice on Referendum Petitions* (<https://www.sos.nm.gov/legislation-and-lobbying/legal-resources/notice-on-referendum-petitions/>) to help voters spot differences between valid and invalid referendum petitions. It also identifies valid petitions currently in circulation.

The Resolution, brought by the Chair, was presented as showing Commission support for constituents participating in a referendum process guaranteed by the state constitution. After stating this, the Resolution continues with the following language:

*“The Board recognizes, applauds and supports the participation and efforts of Sandoval County residents in the petitions (known as the Referendum Project), which is comprised of six (6), separate pieces of legislation, that were passed without voice of the electorate, and are determined to be clear and direct usurpations of parental rights over their minor children, threats to the integrity of election outcomes and violations of individual rights to free speech.”*

Two commissioners then framed the vote as a yes favoring state constitutional rights, and a no as opposing constitutional rights.

In comments, one commissioner asserted that “children are under attack” by one bill in the referendum, and claimed that New Mexico schools surveyed fourth graders using inappropriate questions and told students not to show the survey to parents. He then commented on government activity in other states and concluded with reports of boys raping girls in bathrooms and locker rooms, also in other states or countries. (<https://sandovalcountynm.new.swagit.com/videos/271569> 1:44:25-1:50:00)

Another commissioner asserted that the legislators who passed the bills on the referendum were “duly elected by a majority of the people they serve.” While not denying that there should be an opportunity for referendum, she would not support the role of the County Commission to weigh in on the matter, since the majority of her constituents do not share the views in the above paragraph from the Resolution. After concluding, the commissioner left the chamber, returning after the vote was taken. (<https://sandovalcountynm.new.swagit.com/videos/271569> 1:50:10-1:52:51)

## **Additional Comments**

### Public Comment

Five of 12 speakers commented on the Governor’s gun ban, and three on conditions at SRMC and the unionization of nurses.

In addition, the District 44 state representative commented that HB 7 was passed to provide a safe place for our state’s transgender youth to be heard in a medical or school setting. She pointed out that

the bill does not affect parental consent and that minors cannot access insurance or fund medical treatment without parental involvement. She urged commissioners to lead by ensuring transgender youth are safe and feel heard as self-harm and suicide rates rise.

(<https://sandovalcountynm.new.swagit.com/videos/271569> 1:13:00-1:17:15)

### Commissioners Discussion

One commissioner accused two fellow commissioners who did not vote yes on the referendum resolution of violating their oath of office to uphold the constitution and directly asked them never to do that again. (<https://sandovalcountynm.new.swagit.com/videos/271569> 3:44:00-3:47:00)

### **Sandoval County Commission Website**

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



### **Observer Corps Report – Sandoval County Commission regular meeting**

**September 27, 2023**

**Mary Templeton, observer (via video recording)**

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

### **Description of Issues Relevant to the League**

No agenda items of interest to the League were taken up in this meeting.

### **Additional Comments**

#### Announcements (Procedure)

The Chair reminded those present that County property may not be used for campaigning. The County Ethics Ordinance states that “public servants shall not use any County property or resource for any political activity for the benefits of any campaign for elected office or any political organization.

Regarding discussion in commission meetings, “unless comments are specifically along the lines of, ‘This is who I am; I have done all these good things for the community; Vote for me’ or ‘Don’t vote for me,’ speakers are voicing opinions during the part of the meeting expressly set aside for that purpose. Attempting to reign in content that is at its core political speech has first amendment implications. However, the chair is given a great deal of latitude. In behaviors such as personal attacks or commissioners or employees or commission addressing other members of the Board directly, (because, by the way, all communication between the commission and other commissioners must come through the Chair), the Chair will gavel down such comments.”

## Public Comment

Seven of 15 speakers commented on the vote regarding support of the Referendum Project taken in the September 13, 2023 meeting.

## Commissioners Discussion

The Chair spoke in support of the proposed federal plan to permanently protect the Buffalo Tract from new oil drilling and mining for 50 years. This 4000-acre tract near Placitas is sacred to the Santa Ana and San Felipe Pueblos, a site of archeological significance, and a popular area for outdoor recreation. There has been widespread community support for the ban. One current concern is with gravel mining on this land - the Chair has been working with others to help an active gravel mining company relocate from the Buffalo Tract to another area.

**As background**, a 90-day public comment period for this proposed plan began on September 18<sup>th</sup>. For more about this plan, see <https://www.heinrich.senate.gov/newsroom/in-the-news/new-plan-will-protect-buffalo-tract-near-placitas-from-mining>.

## **Sandoval County Commission Website**

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



## **Observer Corps Report – Sandoval County Commission regular meeting**

**October 11, 2023**

**Mary Templeton, observer (via video recording)**

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

## **Description of Issues Relevant to the League**

### Election Procedures

The Commission approved a motion to authorize the County Manager to approve a service agreement with a new vendor to provide faster Internet speeds to Sandoval County buildings through fiber optic connectivity. The current 7 Mbps upload rate is unreasonably slow for uploading tabulated results to the state system on election nights.

**As background**, LWVNM supports funding to meet the requirements of the law and to serve the needs of the voters to ensure that elections are conducted accurately, fairly, and efficiently.

## **Additional Comments**

### Public Comment

Three of seven speakers commented on election integrity.

## Commissioners Discussion

One commissioner recapped national and international issues that included inflation, border walls, the economy, and new and potential wars.

The Chair explained to attendees that local governments do not have the authority to enact ordinances, such as some suggested by the public, that conflict with State and Federal law.

## **Sandoval County Commission Website**

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



## **Observer Corps Report – APS Board of Education meetings**

**September 20, 2023 and October 4, 2023**

**Laura J. Downing**

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

**Public Forum.** The public forum has continued to be dominated by speakers concerned with books and classes that potentially discuss gender-identity and the availability of gender-affirming counselling in APS schools. While the past several meetings had been dominated by members of groups critical of APS policies, at the 4 October meeting a large number of speakers – parents, teachers, students, alumni – came to support APS and New Mexico State policies guaranteeing rights of minorities, including LGBTQ+ students. In addition, one speaker expressed concerns about threats of banning books in the schools simply because they discuss diversity of some kind. (4 October fell during Banned Book Week.) On a different topic, a science teacher drew attention to lack of equitable distribution of resources among APS schools.

**The Board meetings proper** continue to be dominated by detailed discussions implementing the strategic five-year plan for APS in order to satisfy the settlement requirements of the Yazzie-Martinez lawsuit. On 20 September, the discussion focused on goals related to student retention, noting that students in the Yazzie-Martinez group are most likely to drop out of school. Numerous strategies for identifying at risk students in time for intervention and motivating students to attend school regularly and complete their diplomas were discussed. Special training events for APS staff were announced, including nonviolence training, as part of the new restorative justice approach to incidents of, especially, gun-related violence in some APS schools.

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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.**

