

The VOTER

OCTOBER 2023

VOL 88, NO. 10

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF CENTRAL NEW MEXICO

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

LWVCNM President's Report Donna Sandoval, President and Treasurer

LWVCNM BOARD RETREAT

The Board participated in a facilitated retreat on September 9, 2023.

Our facilitator, Mindy Young, started us off with the guidelines and expectations for the day. Mindy, an experienced professional facilitator, and League member, generously donated many hours of her time to organize the retreat.



We participated in a variety of time boxed and upbeat activities designed to meet the following outcomes:

1. A shared understanding of the current state of the organization
2. An assessment of our organization against basic success factors
3. A categorization and prioritization of our goals
4. A gap closure plan



At the end of our four-hour session, we mapped out potential goals for Board focus:

- VOTE411/The Voter Guide
- Succession and Recruitment
- Member Engagement
- Annual Fundraising

The Board will try to organize our efforts going forward in these areas.



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

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



OCTOBER EDUCATIONAL MEETING

WHEN: Thursday, October 12, Noon-1 PM

TOPIC: Municipal Elections 2023, Part One: The Issues

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

Speaker: Dr. Timothy Krebs



Our October speaker, Dr. Timothy Krebs, is a professor of Political Science at the University of New Mexico. His research focuses on urban elections and policy, and he teaches courses in state and urban policy, campaigns and elections, and state politics. Dr. Krebs will discuss the importance of the upcoming municipal elections.

Dr. Krebs earned his B.A. at Loyola Marymount University and M.A. and Ph.D. at Loyola University Chicago. In addition to research and teaching, Dr. Krebs has held administrative and service positions including seven years as Chair of the UNM Department of Political Science. He currently serves as the Political Science Department's Internship Coordinator. Dr. Krebs is co-author of *Understanding Urban Politics: Institutions, Representation, and Policies*, and he has published over two dozen peer-reviewed articles and book chapters on women and local politics, city council representation, urban

elections and campaigns, and institutional reform in state government. He received the Thornburg Foundation Good Government Reform Grant in Fall 2019 and Best Dissertation Award, given by the Urban Politics Section of the American Political Science Association. Dr. Krebs is the father of two wonderful teenagers, and a huge Dodgers fan!

The October Program meeting will also include a brief update on a General Obligation (GO) Bond issue on the November ballot from Olivia Padilla-Jackson VP of Finance and Operations from Central New Mexico Community College (CNM). Ms. Padilla-Jackson will provide an update on CNM and will provide election details. She will be available to answer any questions regarding CNM or the GO Bond election.

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 or 505-881-8441

LWVCNM BOOK CLUB

Date: October 25, 2023 (Wednesday)

Time: 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Location: LWVCNM Office Conference Room, 6739 Academy Road NE (ample lot parking)

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."

Book Club coordinators, Janet Kirkpatrick, Mary Mulvany, and Laura Downing, invite you 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.

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



LWVCNM Happy Hour Meet-up

Fall is in the air, and it is time for a LWVCNM Happy Hour meet-up!

Please join fellow members at
Craft Republic, 4301 The Lane at 25 Northeast,
on **Thursday, October 26th from 4 pm – 6 pm.**

Craft offers beers, burgers, flatbreads & other American fare,
plus cocktails, in a sports-bar setting.

This will be a good opportunity to reminisce with friends about our
Candidate Forums and relax before election day!

- **GINA MAHFOUZ**

Chamber of Commerce Civics Bee - Linda Miller and Judith Binder

The New Mexico Statewide Civics Bee took place in Albuquerque at the UNM Student Union Building on August 19, 2023. The nationwide Civics Bee was introduced two years ago by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to encourage young Americans in middle school grades to engage in civics and contribute to their communities.



The format includes a 500-word essay describing a community problem and suggesting ways to solve it. It is followed by an in-person competition for the finalists similar to the well-known Spelling Bee. The New Mexico Civics Bee was sponsored by the New Mexico Chamber of Commerce. There were numerous political figures in the audience including the Lieutenant Governor, several state representatives, and school board trustees. LWVCNM members Liz Shields, Judith Binder, and Linda Miller attended.

The participants, who were New Mexico students in middle school in 2022, had submitted essays on using civics to solve a problem in their community, and were selected as the ten finalists statewide. Topics included sexual violence, bullying, safer communities, improvements to parks, and homelessness.

The participants, and the audience along with them, answered two rounds of questions about government structure and the constitution. The quiz was online; the students used tablets to record their answers, and the audience used their phones. The questions were difficult. A sample of them can be found at <https://civics.uschamberfoundation.org/quiz>.

The five students who had the highest scores were asked to give a three-minute speech about their essays and then responded to questions from the three judges. First place was awarded to Auburn Eichers from Rio Rancho, second place went to Victoria Miller from Aztec, and third place went to Esha Shivashankar from Roswell.

This was an enjoyable and worthwhile experience. We recommend attending again next year.

MEMBER CORNER - ELIZABETH SHIELDS

Please watch the mail for your dues renewal letter. You may return the dues in the enclosed envelope or pay by going to LWVCNM web site and clicking on Join/Renew (<https://www.lwvcnm.org/join-renew/>).

Please update any information at the end of the letter.

Many Thanks for your support of LWVCNM which allows us to continue our voter education and advocacy work!

Please also update the phone number for **Vivian Skadron**, Secretary, Board of Directors in the new Membership Handbook to **(505) 350-8916**

UPDATE ON THE NOVEMBER 2023 VOTE411 / VOTER GUIDE PROJECT

The nonpartisan Local and Municipal Elections will be held on November 7th. The LWVCNM is hard at work to bring information on candidates and other issues on the ballot to voters in our four-county area. This is the first time that we have prepared Voter Guide material for municipal elections in Sandoval, Tarrant, and Valencia Counties in addition to Bernalillo County. Teams of League volunteers have gathered information about the races, candidates, and bond questions that will appear on ballots from a wide variety of sources, and we are in the process of entering these data into an online system.

We use LWVUS software, called VOTE411, to send requests to all candidates to answer questions about their priorities and views on issues relevant to voters. Candidate responses will be available to voters in two ways. One way is to use online access through VOTE411.org and enter the voter's address. The voter is taken automatically to the races, candidates, and information on bonds, mill levies, and ballot questions that will appear on her/his ballot. The second way will be to go our website, LWVCNM.org, and view a document similar in format to past printed Voter Guides. Candidate responses to a select set of questions can be read online and downloaded if desired. The website documents will become available when absentee voting begins on October 10.

Note that LWVCNM is not distributing a complete printed Voter Guide this year. The reason is the nature of the election, which is composed of mostly districted nonpartisan races, such as city, town, or village councilors; school board members; supervisors of flood control, soil and water conservation, and water and sanitation districts; small public improvement and tax increment development districts, etc. Each voter's ballot will only have a small number of races. A comprehensive printed Voter Guide is not very useful or practical and wastes a lot of paper.

But rest assured, the printed Voter Guide will be back in 2024!



Candidate Forums

The LWVCNM has geared up to support several candidate forums. There are three remaining.

Monday, October 16th, 7 pm – 8:30 pm – Village Trustee Candidate Forum - Village of Los Ranchos - 6718 Rio Grande Blvd NW, Los Ranchos, NM 87107

Tuesday, October 17th, 6:30 – 8:00 pm -- ABQ City Council Dist. 6 City Candidate Forum – Monte Vista Christian Church – 3501 Campus Blvd. NE 87106

Wednesday, October 18th, 7 pm – 8:30 pm -- Village Mayor Candidate Forum - Village of Los Ranchos - 6718 Rio Grande Blvd NW, Los Ranchos, NM 87107

We cannot sponsor candidate forums without your help, and assistance may still be needed for these events! Please leave a message at the LWVCNM office (505) 884-8441, or contact Gina Mahfouz or Mary H Smith at maryhenrie@msn.com if you would like to help with this or future forums.

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

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

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

LWVCNM CALENDAR

October 5th (always first Thursday) 5:30 pm
[LWVCNM Board Meeting](#), via ZOOM. All members welcome.

October 12th, (Thursday) NOON - 1 PM
LWVCNM Monthly meeting,
In-person & via Zoom

TOPIC:
Municipal Elections 2023, Part One: The Issues
General Overview of upcoming elections and the major
issues facing the electorate.
Speaker: Dr. Timothy Krebs, Professor, Political Science,
Univ. of New Mexico

CANDIDATE FORUMS – see page 5 for more info

October 16th (Monday) 7 pm – 8:30 pm
Village Trustee Candidate Forum - Village of Los Ranchos -
6718 Rio Grande Blvd NW

October 17th (Tuesday) 6:30 pm – 8 pm
ABQ Council District 6 Candidate Forum, Monte Vista
Christian Church – 3501 Campus Blvd. NE

October 18th (Wednesday) 7 pm – 8:30 pm
Village Mayor Candidate Forum - Village of Los Ranchos -
6718 Rio Grande Blvd NW

October 25th (Wednesday) 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
LWVCNM Book Club
LWVCNM Office Conference Room, 6739 Academy Road NE

October 26th (Thursday) 4 pm – 6 pm
LWVCNM HAPPY HOUR @ CRAFT REPUBLIC,
4301 The Lane, IH25 NE

November 2nd (always first Thursday) 5:30 pm
[LWVCNM Board Meeting](#). All members welcome.

November 9th (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

OBSERVER REPORTS



Observer Corps Report – Albuquerque City Council meeting 21 August and 6 September 2023 Mary Mulvany/Janet Kirkpatrick

All nine councilors were present at the August 21, 2023 and the September 6, 2023 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.

Short-term rental ordinance ([O-23-69](#))

At the September 6 meeting the council rejected a proposed change to the short-term rental ordinance by a vote of three in favor (Fiebelkorn, Davis, Benton) to six opposed (Bassan, Lewis, Sanchez, Grout, Jones, Peña). The proposed ordinance change would have made short term rental permits available only to natural born persons, as opposed to a business entity. It would also have limited the total number of short-term rentals in Albuquerque to 1200. A less restrictive floor substitution was also voted down.

Public commenters on this issue pointed out that there is a lack of enforcement of the existing registration and permit requirements.

Opioid settlement funding. Discussion of an amendment to resolution ([R-23-121](#)) at the August 21 meeting demonstrated councilors' concern about the best use of opioid settlement money. R-23-121 is a resolution directing the Albuquerque Family and Community Services (FCS) to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Bernalillo County to allocate funds to the Metropolitan Detention Center for opioid treatment and recovery. An amendment to this resolution called for designation of the remaining money to Gateway Center for opioid treatment.

Councilor Bassan expressed concern about designating money to the Gateway Center for opioid treatment before the Gateway's sobering center is operational. The administration estimates it will be operational at the beginning of next year.

Councilor Fiebelkorn expressed concern about designating money to various programs prior to any kind of comprehensive plan is in place to deal with the community's opioid problems. FCS Division of Behavioral Health and Wellness Deputy Director Ramirez shared that a contract is in place with the Health Equity Council to conduct a community needs health assessment. The assessment report is due September 30. DD Ramirez participated in a Behavioral Health Initiative (BHI) working group with Bernalillo County and facilitated communication between the Health Equity Council and BHI to ensure BHI's input is included in the report.

Councilors Grout and Jones agreed with the need for a comprehensive community-wide plan.

The amendment failed on a 1-8 vote, with Councilor Peña the only vote in favor.

The council postponed vote on R-23-121.

Neon tumbleweed. During the August 21 question and answer period Councilor Grout asked whether a neon tumbleweed planned for the Rail Trail had gone through the public art approval process. The City’s Department of Municipal Development representative stated the Rail Trail neon tumbleweed is in the conceptual design phase and has not gone through the public art approval process. Other art on the Rail Trail will go through the public art process. Councilor Grout stated she has heard from constituents who disapprove of the design and she would like to see the concept reconsidered.

A link to the Rail Trail plan: <https://www.cabq.gov/mra/rail-trail>

A link to neon tumbleweed article: [Route 66 News](#)

Middle Rio Grande Housing Collaborative – Update. None. There was no action or discussion at the August 21 or September 6 meetings regarding the Middle Rio Grande Housing Collaborative.



Observer Corps Report - Sandoval County Commission regular meeting

August 23, 2023

Mary Templeton, observer (via video recording)

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

Description of Issues Relevant to the League

No issues relevant to the League were taken up by the Commission during this meeting.

Additional Comments

Public Comment

Nine of 19 audience members who made public comment advocated to limit voting through “cleaning up” County voter rolls, replacing electronic voting systems and machine tabulation with paper ballots and hand counting, eliminating centralized tabulation centers, eliminating MVD and same-day voter registration, requiring voter IDs, and prohibiting voter registration within 30 days prior to an election.

Commissioners Discussion

The Chair announced that the Deputy County Manager is working with others to ensure that free-roaming horses of Placitas are fed while the County adjusts its original strategy that relied on non-profit organizations for this.

Meeting Materials

Access to links included in the full agenda has been restored.

Sandoval County Commission Website

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



Observer Corps Report – Bernalillo County Commission

September 2023

Karen Wentworth

Bernalillo County Commission Struggles with Transparency

The Bernalillo County Commission has proposed two revisions to the Transparency Portal. In my last report I discussed the revisions. Subsequently we sent this letter, approved by the board to the commissioners.

September 11, 2023

Dear Commissioner Baca,

The League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico has some concern over proposed changes to the Bernalillo County Transparency Portal Ordinance. We are particularly concerned about the proposed addition of a sentence to section 3.

That sentence reads. "[Contracts which could compromise the safety and security of the County will not be included in the contract listing.](#)" During the oral presentation of the proposed ordinance change there was no mention about why the county is seeking the change. On the welcoming page of BERNCO VIEW, the County's official Transparency Portal, its stated purpose is "...to bring better visibility, openness and accountability to county government." How would citizens know that a contract has been entered into if the contract is not listed on the portal. It is also not clear how this would be a benefit to the county.

We would like to urge the county commission to consider a way to list all contracts the county enters into on the Transparency Portal. If there is a specific reason to shield some information about a particular contract, the general purpose of the contract, the reason should be stated, and instructions for making an Inspection of Public Records Request, such as a link to the formal form, should be placed in the Transparency Portal. The language that "contracts which could compromise the security and safety of the County" is too vague to be useful, and appears to be antithetical to the spirit and purpose of the ordinance.

Voters need the opportunity to see and understand the public business of Bernalillo County.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this item.

Sincerely,

Donna Sandoval,
President, League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico

After seeing the letter, the commission postponed a final decision on the change for two weeks. Commissioner Eric Olivas, then asked to meet with representees of the League and we are in the process of arranging that meeting. We will let you know what happened.

Karen Wentworth



Observer Corps Report – Update for City of Albuquerque Mental Health Response Advisory Committee (MHRAC)

Lani Desaulniers

Open public meetings are held monthly (currently on Zoom). Meeting links, with the agenda and minutes are posted on the [MHRAC website](#).

Updates from the July 18, 2023 meeting included:

- Dr. Peter Vielehr, Director of Analytics from APD, presented a detailed summary of contacts for Behavioral Health Incidents provided by the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) in 2022. During the course of the year, more calls were diverted to ACS. A detailed review of CIT calls that resulted in use of force was provided. Presentation slides can be viewed at https://www.cabq.gov/police/documents/ciu_2022_annual_report_final.pdf

Updates from the August 15, 2023 meeting included:

- Smart 911 Service: Albuquerque has initiated a contract with a company ([Smart911](#)) which allows residents to enter information into a database (linked to their phone number) that is accessible to dispatch operators when a 911 call is made. Information is otherwise stored in a secure database. Any information provided is completely voluntary, but could include information about a person's disability (hearing, vision, intellectual), psychiatric diagnosis, advanced directives, etc. that might be helpful to first responders.
- Albuquerque Community Safety (ACS) Report:
 - The department plans to roll out 24/7 services beginning on August 26th. Staff working the night shifts will be equipped with reflective vests, additional lighting sources, as well as emergency lighting for themselves and their vehicles.
 - ACS received notice last week they have been awarded a 2-million-dollar Department of Justice Discretionary Project Grant to support their work.
- [Gateway Center at Gibson Health Hub](#): The 50 residential bed unit for women has now officially opened. They will be providing comprehensive services to these individuals on site – with the overall goal of helping them find a stable housing situation.





Observer Corps Report - APS Board of Education meetings 19 July, 2 and 16 August, 6 September 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 was lightly attended over the summer. Important themes were: several parents expressed support for bilingual education and, specifically, the bilingual program at Washington Middle School which some feared was threatened by a proposed expansion of the Coronado magnet school. Concern was expressed for staffing shortages, such as a lack of special education teachers and teachers for the dual language programs. Members of so-called parents’ rights groups (<https://www.weareteachers.com/parents-rights-opinion/>) continue to attend regularly and falsely accuse APS teachers and counselors of promoting abortions, transgender care, gender identity to even young students, without the knowledge or consent of parents. As noted in previous reports, this is a national movement, and the local group seems to be well organized, since the public forum participants at each meeting seem to come with similar information and sources for their accusations (none of them seem to be referring to actual incidents at any APS school).

The Board meetings proper continued 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, 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/> . One effect of the new Student Outcomes Focused Governance approach that informs the five-year plan is that the Board is monitoring things like attendance and testing results regularly, holding the Superintendent’s office to account to provide data in a much more systematic and transparent way. More information about reports and goals the Board is monitoring during the meetings is now included on the APS website where the Board meeting schedule is listed. Regular community listening sessions are now on the Board’s schedule so that the community should be playing more of a role in decision making.

Given the current staffing shortage for teachers and other school staff, it is important to note that two items came up for approval that might help to improve that situation: the teachers’ union’s new agreement with APS, which improves salaries and working conditions for teachers, and an updated health insurance proposal. These two proposals were passed nearly unanimously, except that one Board member did not approve the union’s proposal and presented a lengthy statement to motivate her decision.



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.

