

The VOTER

MARCH 2024

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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

Join Us for the Brown Bag Lunch and Learn Series

MARCH EDUCATIONAL MEETING



WHEN: THURSDAY, MARCH 14th from Noon – 1:00 p.m.

WHERE: In person/Zoom, LWVCNM conference room, 6739 Academy Rd NE (ample lot parking)

TOPIC: The New Mexico State Ethics Commission: Nearly Five Years In, How is the Commission Ensuring State Government Accountability and What Comes Next?

SPEAKER: Jeremy D. Farris, Executive Director, State Ethics Commission

As the League nationwide celebrates Sunshine Week, LWVCNM is delighted to present a speaker who personally and professionally recognizes that New Mexicans have a right to as much information as possible about as to how and why state government agencies and officials are accountable to the public. We have invited a past speaker to return and share how that aspiration for public accountability is going.

After more than 40 years of persistent efforts by elected officials, advocacy organizations and the public, New Mexicans were finally given the opportunity on the 2018 general election ballot to weigh in on a constitutional amendment establishing a state ethics commission. Over 75% of the voters chose to amend the Constitution to add Article V, Section 17. Late to the game (this writer's opinion), New Mexico became the 45th state to create an independent ethics commission.

In 2019, the Legislature unanimously enacted enabling legislation, the "State Ethics Commission Act," which established the Commission's structure and powers. (NMSA 1978, Sections 10-16G-1 through 10-16G-16.) The Commission is tasked with promoting compliance with the state laws that require state government to be democratic, responsive to the public's interest and ethical: Voter Action Act, Governmental Conduct Act, Campaign Reporting Act, Financial Disclosure Act, Gift Act, Lobbyist Regulation Act, Procurement Code, State Ethics Commission Act and the New Mexico Constitution's "Anti-Donation Clause" (Article IX, Section 14).



Jeremy D. Farris is the first State Ethics Commission Executive Director. He previously served as General Counsel to the New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration and practiced law at litigation firms both in Atlanta, Georgia and Albuquerque. Jeremy clerked for the Honorable Julia S. Gibbons on the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit; the Honorable Judith K. Nakamura on the New Mexico Supreme Court; and the Honorable James O. Browning on the United States District Court for the District of New Mexico.

He holds a law degree from Harvard Law School, a doctorate and master's degree from the University of Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar, and a Bachelors of Science from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Jeremy Farris will share with the League:

- An overview of the Commission's capability and roles – basically, what has been built
- The Commission's successes over the last two plus years
- What goals remain in his last year and half of his first term as director

- Written by Mary H. Smith

LWVCNM Updates & Happenings

Election Updates

The Voter Guide committee completed an online VOTE411 *Voter Guide* for the March 5th Municipal Elections in Sandoval County (Cuba, Jemez Springs, Rio Rancho, and the Town of Bernalillo) as well as a PDF (Portable Document Format – printable and viewable online). We had full participation from the Rio Rancho City Council candidates.

Work is underway for the June 4th Primary Voter Guide. We plan to use VOTE411 but will not be creating a PDF nor a printed guide due to the significant number of races (~ 100) in the four county CNM region: Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torraine, and Valencia.

We need help from members to make calls to candidates in April and May, and to assist with publicizing the Guide in May.

For the November 5th general election, we plan to use VOTE411 and create a print Voter Guide and a PDF which will be posted on our website. Automated Election Services (AES), our long-time printing vendor, will not be able to provide graphic design or printing services. We are currently exploring options for other printers and designers. We anticipate a higher cost this year and will be pursuing various fundraising strategies.

We are seeking volunteers, both new and experienced, to help with the Voter Guide. We have many tasks to be done, both large and small. We are especially in need of members who can assist with:

- * **Graphic Design**
- * **Publicity**
- * **Fundraising**

Please contact Lani Desaulniers (LMDesaul@aol.com), Karen Wentworth (kwentworth17@comcast.net), or the office if you are interested in learning more.

League Days at the 2024 Legislature – by Starlyn Brown & Jennifer Black

Attending League Days at the Legislature was a great experience and very educational. We staffed a table in the Roundhouse on a Wednesday afternoon. We answered questions about the League, had great conversations with people that stopped by and took in all the activity around us. The Capitol Building is a very busy place!



We attended a Senate Committee hearing, which was surprisingly collegial between the parties, with five relatively nonpartisan bills passed unanimously.

Next came the League-hosted evening reception with Raúl Torres, NM State Attorney General, as the featured speaker. His speech and his answers to audience questions were very direct and well considered. Another educational experience.

Thursday morning we attended a League meeting that included two presentations and a discussion of League priorities for the session.

We came away with great appreciation and admiration for the League members who spend countless hours during these sessions advocating for legislation to improve the lives of New Mexicans.



LWVCNM Book Club

Save-the-Date!

Special Author Event!

Date: March 27, 2024

Time: 5:30-7:30 PM

Location: LWVCNM Office Conference Room -- 6739 Academy RD NE, Suite 124

Our focus for our March meeting is the climate and the environment. We are bringing the topic home to New Mexico with ***At the Precipice: New Mexico's Changing Climate*** by Laura Paskus. We are honored to have Laura join us for what promises to be an interesting and lively discussion.

Laura Paskus has reported on environmental issues in New Mexico and the U.S. Southwest since 2002, when she began her career at High Country News. She has worked for print, online, radio, and television outlets, covering the most important environmental issues of her generation, including climate change and its impacts. She's the author of the 2020 book, ***At the Precipice: New Mexico's Changing Climate*** and is senior producer of the series on NMPBS, ***Our Land: New Mexico's Environmental Past, Present and Future***.

Over the course of her career, Paskus has freelanced for local, regional, and national outlets and also worked as managing editor for Tribal College Journal, a publication of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium; as a reporter and producer for KUNM-FM in Albuquerque; and as the environment reporter for New Mexico Political Report.

In 2024, Torrey House Press will publish her new book, ***Water Bodies: Love Letters to the Most Abundant Substance on Earth***.



Jeanne Logsdon, LWVCNM's Director Sustainability/Climate Change, suggests the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report as "extra credit" background material found at this link: [IPCC AR6 Report](#).

Even if you are not able to complete a book in time for a meeting, you are always welcome to join.

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

Questions? Contact Janet at 505-401-2052.

The LWVCNM Book Club meets the 4th Wednesday of each odd-numbered month.

Reservations not required. Just drop in.

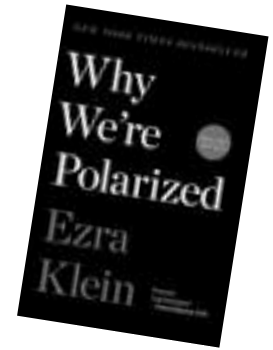
Mark your calendars for the May meeting:

Date: May 22, 2024

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

Location: Park Plaza 1331 Park Ave SW,
Albuquerque, 87102

Title: ***Why We're Polarized*** by Ezra Klein.



Per Simon & Schuster: “A thoughtful, clear and persuasive analysis” (The New York Times Book Review), ***Why We're Polarized*** reveals the structural and psychological forces behind America’s descent into division and dysfunction.

Questions? Contact Janet at 505-401-2052

LWVCNM Annual Meeting

***Saturday, April 20th, 2024 at
the Marriott Uptown***

Guest Speaker

UNM Regent Paula Tackett

Registration begins at 9:30am

***Watch your mailboxes! The Annual
Meeting newsletter will be mailed
by March 20th, 2024***

The June 2024 Primary Election and Political Party Affiliation

By Starlyn Brown

2024 is a big election year starting with the June Primary election! Are you familiar with the rules about voting in primary elections and changing your political party affiliation?

Only voters who are registered in a **MAJOR** political party can vote in Primary elections in New Mexico. New Mexico has three MAJOR political parties. In alphabetical order they are Democrat, Libertarian and Republican. All voters registered in a **MINOR** political party or Decline to State (**DTS**) must change their political party registration to a MAJOR political party to vote in the primary. After you vote in the primary, you can change your political party affiliation again.

Now for the good news! Your current voter registration determines which option you should follow if you want to change your political party affiliation for the primary election. Follow the directions in **Option A - MAJOR** party or **Option B MINOR** party and **DTS**.

Option A – Major Party

If you are registered with a **MAJOR** party and want to change your party affiliation, you **must** do it at least 28 days prior to the **primary** election to vote for candidates in that party. You can change your party by going to your County Clerk's office, online at [NMVOTE.ORG](https://nmvote.org), or by filling out a new Voter Registration form. You **cannot** use Same Day Voter Registration (SDR) to switch parties during the Primary Election. You may however update your name, address, or other contact information during SDR.

Option B – Minor Party or DTS

If you are registered with a **MINOR** party, or as Decline to State (**DTS**) you will **not** be able to vote in the June 4, 2024 primary unless you change your party affiliation to one of the three major parties. To make a change utilize Same Day Voter Registration (SDR) at your polling site. SDR is available on the day you go to vote during early voting and on election day. You can also make the change online on the [Secretary of State Website](#). If you choose to make the change online be sure to follow the 28 day rule.

Note: **MINOR** parties in New Mexico do not hold publicly funded primaries to choose their candidates, but rather nominating conventions at dates and locations of their choosing. Check each minor party's website for more information on details of their conventions and their rules governing convention voting qualifications.

LWVCNM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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

**Please note Board meetings have been changed to the
first Wednesday of each month.**

March 5th (Tuesday)

**Municipal Elections in Sandoval County (Cuba, Jemez
Springs, Rio Rancho, and the Town of Bernalillo)**

March 6th (first Wednesday) 5:30 pm

**LWVCNM Board Meeting, ZOOM only until further
notice. All members welcome.**

March 14th (Thursday) 12 pm – 1 pm

**LWVCNM Monthly meeting, hybrid In-person & ZOOM
Honor Sunshine Week and its national mission to
promote public discussion about the importance of
open government. Guest speaker will be Jeremy
Farris, Exec. Director of the New Mexico State Ethics
Commission.**

March 27th (Wednesday) 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

LWVCNM Book Club

See article p. 4 - 5

**Please check this [Book Club link](#) found also on the For
Members section of the LWVCNM website for book
selection and location.**

April 3rd (first Wednesday) 5:30 pm

**LWVCNM Board Meeting, ZOOM only until further
notice. All members welcome.**

**Note: Due to the April Annual Meeting, there
is no Thursday educational meeting in April.**

April 20th (Saturday) registration starts 9:30 am

**LWVCNM Annual Meeting, Marriot Uptown
Guest speaker: UNM Regent Paula Tackett
More details available soon.**

OBSERVER REPORTS



Observer Corps Report – Albuquerque City Council meeting

22 January and 5 February 2024

Mary Mulvany /Janet Kirkpatrick

All nine councilors were present at both the January 22 and February 5 meetings: Louie Sanchez – District 1, Joaquin Baca – District 2, Klarissa Peña – District 3, Brook Bassan – District 4, Dan Lewis – District 5, Nichole Rogers – District 6, Tammy Fiebelkorn – District 7, Dan Champine – District 8, Renée Grout, District 9.

Albuquerque Police Department (APD) DWI Unit

At the January 22 meeting Councilors expressed frustration about the lack of communication from the city administration and APD leadership about a federal investigation into APD’s DWI unit. Councilors wondered why they did not receive information from City admin or APD leadership prior to hearing about it on the news. Councilors also expressed concern about a lack of communication with the public and urged that the mayor use a public forum to provide greater transparency into the issue. Councilors expressed concern about low morale in the department and urged the leadership to speak out in support of officers who do the right thing. Police Chief Medina was not present at the meeting, but the Deputy Chief assured councilors that APD was taking the situation seriously and cooperating with the FBI.

Police Chief Medina was in attendance at the February 5 meeting. (Some councilors had sent him a letter requesting his attendance at the meeting.) Councilors asked him about department processes relating to DWI unit court appearances by officers. Councilor Sanchez called the Chief’s previous response that the District Attorney’s office was responsible for notifying APD of missed court appearances “deflection” and “absurd.” Later in the meeting Councilor Sanchez moved to place a resolution on the next meeting’s agenda to remove Chief Media for failed leadership. The motion received no second and the resolution will not appear on the next agenda.

Communication and Boundaries Between Equal Government Branches

Councilors expressed concern about a member of the administration entering the Council offices after hours. Chief Administrative Officer Dr. Sengel used her access badge to enter the Council office to deliver a notification about Air Quality Board appointees after the office was closed for the day. Discussion ensued, including a request from Councilor Bassan that the Council receive keys to the Mayor’s office, as “what’s good for the goose is good for the gander.” The Council will draft and pass a set of processes to follow in the future.

Hospitality Renewal Initiative Working Group

Councilors Grout and Rogers teamed up to sponsor R-24-5, a resolution creating The Hospitality Renewal Initiative Working Group to make recommendations for the motel voucher program within the city. The working group includes members from city departments: Health Housing and Homelessness,

Code Enforcement, Community Safety, Fire, and Police departments, Mayor's office, two community members knowledgeable about hotel operation, and two community members familiar with the voucher program. The City Council unanimously passed the resolution. [R-24-5](#)

General Comments

January 22nd general comments from the public:

- One comment requesting that the Council send a message to Washington D.C. urging action to end the genocide in Gaza and call for a cease-fire.
- One comment calling for APD to take action into excessive use of force and corruption.
- One comment citing concerns about conditions at the Juvenile Detention Center and calling for better leadership there.

February 5th general comments from the public:

- One comment suggesting an alternative solution to the homelessness crisis that is being used in Houston: using small group homes of 4-6 individuals with an on-site counselor.
- One comment calling for improved education. This speaker had recently been to another state and seen an education system with smaller class sizes and increased resources, which could help the education system in Albuquerque.
- One speaker from the Police Athletic League (PAL) spoke of frustrations in dealing with the city about the facility it has used. (According to its website and statements by Councilor Sanchez, PAL provides mentorship and support to at-risk youth through athletics.) The city has given a vacate notice to PAL and the speaker felt that not enough has been done to find an alternate site. City administration officials and Councilor Bassan also spoke about their knowledge of the issue which implied there is more to the story than the facility issues.



Observer Corps Report – Bernalillo County Commission

January 23, 2024

Karen Wentworth

Bernalillo County Commission Moves Middle Rio Grande Housing Collaborative Forward

The Bernalillo County Commission took steps to formalize the Middle Rio Grande Housing Collaborative at its January 23rd meeting. The commission appointed University of New Mexico Law Professor Serge Martinez and the new state housing leader appointed by Governor Martinez, Dan Majewski, to the board of the collaborative.

They also passed an administrative resolution to explore the viability of combining the city's housing authority and programs with the Bernalillo County Housing Department. The city and county will each provide half a million dollars for startup costs.

The county had also asked for \$10 million from the state legislature for the housing collaborative. They received \$1,183,000.

According to the resolution, the money will be used to survey current affordable housing and look for gaps, acquire land for future development, repurpose existing properties to expand affordable housing, and prioritize equity building investments such as apartment cooperatives.

It will now be up to Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller to appoint two people to represent the city to the collaborative.

All members of the Bernalillo County Commission were present for the meeting.



Observer Report - Sandoval County Commission regular meeting

January 24, 2024

Mary Templeton, observer (by video recording)

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

Description of Issues Relevant to the League

No agenda items were taken up for which the League has a policy position.

Additional Comments

Public Comment

Five of sixteen speakers challenged the District 1 commissioner's legitimacy to hold office based either on representation disagreement or distrust of the 2022 election results. The Commission Chair expressed concern over these attacks. Three speakers associated with the High Desert Treatment Center celebrated sobriety success and thanked the Commission for its support. Two speakers spoke about general election distrust and two expressed fear over people crossing the southern Border.

Commissioners Discussion

One commissioner asserted that "over 9 million illegals" crossed the southern border in the last 3 years. (<https://sandovalcountynm.new.swagit.com/videos/295846> 1:39:22). He attributed "terrorists...record just awful sex trafficking...hundreds of thousands of American have died of drug overdoses..." to these border crossings.

As background, the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol lists 3,267,405 unlawful crossings (Title 8 apprehensions) from 2021 through 2023 (<https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/cbp-enforcement-statistics/title-8-and-title-42-statistics>). If you also include those seeking lawful admission, total individuals numbered 7,924,245 over the same three years (<https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/cbp-enforcement-statistics>). Not all who sought lawful admission entered the U.S.

Sandoval County Commission Website

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



Observer Report - Sandoval County Commission regular meeting

February 7, 2024

Mary Templeton, observer (by video recording)

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

Description of Issues Relevant to the League

Citizen's Rights to Public Participation & Civil Engagement/Discourse

The Commission discussed the adoption of Resolution No. 2-7-24.11A ([Agenda item 11.B](#)), which amends items 7 (Public Comments) and 8 (Addressing the Commission) of the Sandoval County Board of County Commissioners Rules of Procedure. The main changes are that:

- Public comments must address an agenda item.
- Speakers may not distribute handouts to Commissioners during public comment or use County staff to do so, but may distribute handouts by email before or after the meeting.
- Speakers must address comments to the Chair and not individual commissioners, staff, or the audience.
- Speakers shall not address Commissioners by their given names.
- Speakers shall speak to issues, not personalities.
- During Commissioner comment, Commissioners shall confine their remarks to agenda items, commission business or matters discussed during the meeting.

During the ensuing discussion (<https://sandovalcountynm.new.swagit.com/videos/296848> 1:12:25), the first Commissioner recognized for comment vented hurt feelings at fellow Commissioners through name calling and personal attacks. After this Commissioner shouted down another Commissioner recognized for comment, the Chair shouted down the Commissioners and read the sections of Thomas Jefferson's manual on decorum and of Roberts Rules of Order on which the amendments were based. After more discussion on the appropriateness of presenting lengthy views on national news during Commission meetings, the Commission voted 3 to 2 to postpone voting on the Resolution until they could revisit parts of it with the County Attorney.

As background, LWVUS supports protection of citizens to publicly participate in government decision making. In addition, LWVNM promotes civil discourse, which means, at a minimum, mutually respectful, courteous, constructive, and orderly communication.

Meeting Basic Human Needs

The Commission voted 3 to 2 along party lines to adopt Resolution No. 2-7-24.11D ([Agenda item 11.D](#)) to oppose the Paid Family and Medical Leave bill (SB3) currently in front of the New Mexico Legislature. Some who voted for the Resolution said they favor Paid Family and Medical Leave, but not this specific bill.

As background, LWVUS supports programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families.

Additional Comments

Public Comment

Seventeen of 25 speakers spoke against the proposed amendments to the Sandoval County Board of County Commissioners Rules of Procedure, items 7 & 8. Most objected to being required to address an agenda item. Four speakers expressed distrust of past elections, two speakers expressed disdain for the sheriff and two speakers were gavelled down for attempting to campaign.

Sandoval County Commission Website

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



Observer Corps Report APS Board of Education meetings,

12 February 2024

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.

Public Forum. The public forum continues to be lightly attended, and it continues to be dominated by speakers concerned with APS policies related to creating safe spaces for LGBTQ+ (and other groups) as well as the availability of gender-affirming counselling in APS schools. Supporters of the LGBTQ+ community continue to speak out in favor of schools as a safe space, while other speakers accuse APS of providing inappropriate support to the LGBTQ+ community and keeping parents informed. One person protested the new safe spaces flag for bearing too close a resemblance to the pride flag. On another topic, one parent spoke in favor of systemic support for CTE programs in APS schools.

LWVNM policies addressed in public forum: “LWVNM believes that every student should have access to a high-quality [...] education regardless of gender [identity], race, ethnicity, family income, or geographical location. Each student should be respected as an individual in learning environments that value diverse cultures.” “Promote practices that lead to physical, mental, and emotional well-being.”

The Board meetings proper have been mainly concerned with presenting and evaluating the progress monitoring reports required under the new Student Outcomes Focused Governance (SOFG) goals and guardrails adopted by APS last fall. The details of the process are probably a bit tedious for casual observers. What is important for League members is that the evaluation and reporting process leads to a much higher degree of transparency and accountability on the part of the Board of Education and its interactions with the Superintendent’s office. At the February 7th meeting, the budget for FY 2024 was discussed in detail, with a focus on whether adequate funding is being provided to support SOFG goals. More specialized budget presentations to clarify this issue were planned for future meetings.



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 lwvcnmoffice@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.

