

The VOTER

SEPTEMBER 2024

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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF CENTRAL NEW MEXICO

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

President Report By Starlyn Brown

August was a very busy month! We focused our time and energy in three major areas, Voter Registration, Women's Equality Day dedication of the Julia Brown Asplund Trail Marker, and the November General Election.

The Women's Equality Day celebration on August 26th commemorated the passage of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote, marking a significant victory in the long struggle for women's rights. The day served as a reminder of the ongoing fight for full equality, including the legal protections sought through the ERA. It was my honor to participate in the dedication ceremony of the Julia Brown Asplund Trail Marker, installed on the UNM campus. UNM Professor Amy Johnson spoke about the life and accomplishments of Julia Brown Asplund. Yvonne Novar, from Mayor Tim Kellor's office read the mayor's proclamation. The dedication ceremony was followed by a program and refreshments inside beautiful Hodgin Hall. Hannah Burling, Co-President LWVNM introduced Dr. Cathleen Cahill, Pennsylvania State University and Lisa K. Curtis, Esq., Chair, NM Commission on the Status of Women. Dr. Cahill gave an historical perspective of New Mexico women and their impact. Ms. Curtis spoke to us and gave a current perspective on New Mexico women and the work of the commission. Jeanne Logsdon, the driving force for several years making the day a reality, gave closing remarks. It was the perfect way to celebrate the day and to honor Julia Brown Asplund, a New Mexico women's suffrage leader and an extraordinary woman.



Starlyn Brown speaking at Julia Brown Asplund Trail Marker dedication on the UNM campus.

Ten LWVCNM members completed **Bernalillo County Voter Registration Agent (VRA) training**. The growing number of VRAs means we are attending more Voter Registration events and registering more Voters. We have been able to say yes to every request!

We have 11 voter registration events on the schedule and anticipate there will be more. In addition to our valued existing voter registration partners, several new events at new locations are scheduled.

We are excited to partner with the **UNM Women's Resource Center** on two upcoming events. Events are also scheduled at the **LUSH** store in Uptown, the **Transgender Resource Center**, **CNM Open House**, **Canteen Brewhouse**, **Immigration Week of Action**, **UNM Native American Studies**, **Other Mothers**, **UNM Honors College**, and **UNM Law School**.

The November general election **Voter Guide Committee** volunteers are spending hours collecting information for Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrence and Valencia counties for our website lwvcnm.org, VOTE411.org and the printed and pdf versions of the *Voter Guide*.

The printed and pdf *Voter Guide* is the **only** place to find ballot information consolidated **in one publication** for the four counties that we serve.

Federal, State, and County Candidates, Judicial Retention, State and County Bonds, State Constitutional Amendments, Albuquerque City Charter Amendments, and Mill Levies are all included.



Starlyn Brown, Lydia Wolberg, Aine McCarthy, Betsy Carlson at the UNM Women's Resource Center

Our fundraising campaign to defray the cost of printing 25,000 copies of the General Election *Voter Guide* has been very successful. This success is due to **you**, our members! We asked and you have generously answered. League member Lori Feilbelman deserves full credit for introducing us to crowdfunding using the Zeffy.com donation platform. This innovative way to ask for donations was quite successful and made contributing easy for those comfortable using online donation tools. Many others contributed by sending a check to the LWVCNM office. I am personally grateful for your membership, any donation you were able to make, and your ongoing belief in and support of LWVCNM. As we get closer to achieving our fundraising goal, there is still time to support the 2025 *Voter Guide* by mailing a check to the office or visiting [Zeffy](http://Zeffy.com) [here](#).

As a reminder you can find past issues of the *Voter* newsletters at lwvcnm.org under the **Voter/Newsletter** menu [here](#). Missed a monthly educational meeting? Zoom recordings of these meetings are available under the **For Members** menu [here](#). I invite you to take a few minutes to explore lwvcnm.org and the trove of information available to our members and the public.

Join us for the Brown Bag Lunch and Learn Series'



SEPTEMBER EDUCATIONAL MEETING

Thursday, September 12th • Noon

WHERE: In person (members and guests), Conference room, 6739 Academy Rd. NE, ample parking available; Zoom (members, guests, and general public)

TOPIC: **Is Ranked Choice Voting the Answer for Expensive Runoff Elections?**

SPEAKERS: Shannon Kunkel, Outreach and Development Director for Common Cause New Mexico; Katharine Clark, Santa Fe County Clerk; and Christine Rivera, Las Cruces City Clerk

In Albuquerque the cost of recurring runoffs in municipal elections has spurred debates about how to deal with the issue. This summer, the City Council's solution was to amend the city charter to reduce the threshold for winning municipal elections from a majority to a plurality. This resolution was vetoed by the Mayor and the veto was sustained at a subsequent City Council meeting.

Las Cruces and Santa Fe have adopted Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) for municipal elections with some success. **Why not Albuquerque?**

Join us for an in-depth look at Ranked Choice Voting at **Noon on Thursday, September 12th** either in-person or Zoom. Our panelists will be:



Shannon Kunkel, the Outreach and Development Director for Common Cause New Mexico, will discuss the current state of RCV across the country. She is an Albuquerque native and UNM graduate with a bachelor's degree in journalism in 2008 and an MBA with a focus in marketing in 2012. As a former consultant for Common Cause New Mexico, Shannon brings more than 10 years of experience in the nonpartisan democracy and good-government space. In her position, she engages its membership throughout New Mexico, as well as supporting democracy-forward policy initiatives at the state and local level.



Katharine Clark, Santa Fe County Clerk, heads the County Clerk's Office which has been instrumental in the successful rollout of RCV for the city of Santa Fe. She knows firsthand the challenges that go with introducing voters to a new way of voting. She will share her experiences with us. The County Clerk's Office also uses targeted voter outreach to expand its voter base and increase the diversity among voters. Its efforts are winning results – Santa Fe County now has the highest 'large county' voter turnout in New Mexico.



Christine Rivera has been serving as the Las Cruces City Clerk for the past 5 years. She will discuss the responses from city counselors and the citizens of Las Cruces to RCV. She holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Psychology. In recognition of her outstanding contributions, Christine was nominated for Clerk of the Year in 2023 by the New Mexico Municipal League and was honored with a place on the Municipal Clerks Honor Roll in 2024.

Our October LWVCNM Educational **Program** will feature a discussion of "The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on the 2024 Election" with Professor Huiping Cao, NMSU Department of Computer Science.

ERA Now! By Starlyn Brown

It is 2024 and women still do not have secure comprehensive legal equality in the Constitution of the United States. My question is why? I reject the idea that women are less than..... you fill in the blank. The Equal Rights Amendment (**ERA**) is critically important because it seeks to enshrine gender equality in the U.S. Constitution, providing explicit legal protection against sex-based discrimination. It would provide a constitutional guarantee of gender equality, offering stronger legal protections against discrimination and supporting efforts to close the gender pay gap and achieve broader social justice.



One-Person-One-Vote

aka **Abolish the Electoral College**

aka **The Moon Shot**

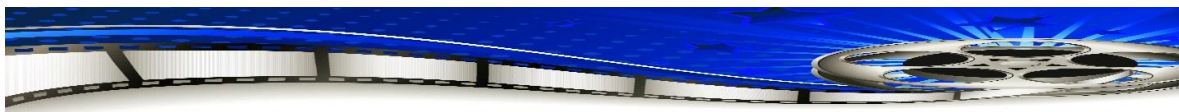
At the national LWVUS convention in June, the League introduced a new campaign aimed at eliminating the Electoral College and moving to a direct system of one-person-one-vote to elect the President and Vice President of the United States. Since many people are unaware of how the Electoral College works and don't realize that our vote for President and Vice President is actually a vote for an Elector or Electors -- not directly for the candidates -- the first step in the League's campaign is to educate voters about the Electoral College, the problems it creates for our democratic system, and the need for change.

The links below are 1) a panel discussion from the opening of the LWVUS convention with experts on the Electoral College, and 2) an instructional Zoom slideshow explaining how the EC works and refuting some of the misperceptions about the Electoral College. I hope you will take the time to view the sessions and get up-to-speed on this goal the League is calling the "Moonshot."

1. [Turn Up for One Person, One Vote | This spring the League launched One Person, One Vote, our long-term campaign to build the movement to end the Electoral College. Together, we will move... | By League of Women Voters of the US Facebook | Facebook](#)
2. [Why We Must Abolish the Electoral College and Elect the President by Direct Popular Vote, LWVUS slideshow presented by Joyce Williams - Zoom](#)

LWVCNM member Anne Galer is involved with this project and is beginning to develop Zoom and PowerPoint presentations tailored for New Mexico voters. If you would like to get involved, please contact Anne at thegalergroup@gmail.com. She would like to establish a group of people who could do outreach to other league members and the community and would welcome your help.

LWVCNM BOOK CLUB



~Invitation to All LWVCNM Members~
Special Film Event at the Guild Cinema
3405 Central Avenue NE
Wednesday, September 18, 3:30 PM

The LWVCNM Book Club invites all members to the Guild Cinema for a viewing of **JOIN OR DIE**, a new documentary based on our November Book Club selection, ***Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community by Robert D. Putnam*** (see book details below). Whether you are a regular Book Club attendee looking to enrich your reading experience or just interested in this special film event, join us for a great opportunity to view this “engaging, quirky” documentary about the importance of community.

We will gather after the film for a **Happy Hour** right down the road at **O’Neill’s Pub**. Movie tickets can be purchased at the door for \$7 or in advance/online for \$7 + a small service charge. For more information and to purchase tickets online, visit:

<https://www.guildcinema.com/movies/join-or-die--an-engaging-and-quirky-doc-about-why-you-should-join-a-club>

The group selected the following titles for the September and November meetings:

Date: September 25, 2024

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

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

The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together by Heather McGhee

A *New York Times* best seller and Winner of the Porchlight Business Book Award.

Per the publisher, Penguin Random House:

Heather McGhee’s specialty is the American economy—and the mystery of why it so often fails the American public. From the financial crisis of 2008 to rising student debt to collapsing public infrastructure, she found a root problem: racism in our politics and policymaking.

Read more about the book and author at this link: [The Sum of Us by Heather McGhee-Penguin Random House](#)

Date: November 20, 2024 (Note- this is the third Wednesday due to Thanksgiving Holiday)

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

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

Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community by Robert D. Putnam

Per the publisher, Simon & Schuster:

Robert D. Putnam is the Malkin Research Professor at Harvard University. He received the National Humanities Medal from President Obama in 2013 for “deepening our understanding of community in America”. Drawing on vast data that reveal Americans’ changing behavior, Putnam shows how we have become increasingly disconnected from one another and how social structures—whether they be PTA, church, or political parties—have disintegrated.

Read more about the book and author at this link: [Bowling Alone by Robert Putnam-Simon & Schuster](#)

Contact Janet at 505-401-2052 with questions.



Save the Date!

When: Sunday, October 27th, 2 PM
Where: The Vortex Theater, 2900 Carlisle Blvd NE
What: Performance, Talkback & Happy Hour
Who: LWVCNM Members + One Guest
Cost: \$20 Discounted Ticket Price

With the election just a few days away, we warmly invite LWVCNM members to relax and enjoy an afternoon of award-winning theater. The topic of the play holds extraordinary relevance in a time of constitutional challenge. As a way of thanking our members for their hard work during this important election season, we have reserved a block of 30 tickets at a discounted price (tickets are regularly \$24). **Reservations are on a first-come, first-served basis.**

What the Constitution Means to Me **Written by Heidi Schreck** **Directed by Leslee Richards**

Heidi Schreck's Pulitzer and Tony-nominated play addresses themes of women's rights, immigration, domestic abuse and the history of the United States as she takes us on a tour of her childhood, teen years and adulthood while helping us understand the nuances and future of America's most important document. Director Richards says:

"This is the most challenging, fun and moving way to understand the history of our country, our politics and our future."

The performance will be followed by a **Talkback** where you will have the opportunity to meet the director and cast of the play, discuss the meaning and importance of the play, and learn how the cast members personalized the work. Reflect on what the performance meant to you and could mean to other audience members.

After the performance and Talkback, we will gather at the **Canteen Brewhouse, 2381 Aztec Rd NE**, for an optional Happy Hour. Make a full afternoon of this special gathering.

Please make your reservations ASAP. If we sell out our 30 member ticket block early, we will still have the option to reserve additional seats at the discounted price. All reservations must be accompanied by an online payment or check sent to our office. **Tickets cannot be held without payment.**

How Do I Reserve My Ticket? **It's Easy!**

Reservations will be on a **first-come, first-served** basis, so please make your reservation **ASAP**. You may register in one of two ways: Download this [form](#), and mail it in with your check. Or pay online with a credit card [here](#). Reservations cannot be accepted without payment. If you need help with reservations, leave a message on our office phone at 505-884-8441.

LWVCNM Updates & Happenings

ELECTION UPDATES

Plans for the November 5th general election are moving forward. We have entered the production phase for the printed *Voter Guide* as the content for VOTE411 is being finalized.

Fundraising efforts continue. Donations for the guide are being solicited via Zeffy.com. We have received many donations on our website and in the mail.

We have had an amazing group of volunteers come forward to assist with the *Voter Guide*. We are still looking to identify sites in the community to stock the print guides, and to post flyers. We continue to work to provide our resources to a broader audience in the community, so we will still need help with publicity.

Lastly, we will need a large team to help deliver the *Voter Guide* in early October, so stay tuned! We will put a call out for help when the guides are available! Please contact Lani Desaulniers (LMDesaul@aol.com), Karen Wentworth (kwentworth17@comcast.net), or the office at 505-884-8441 if you are interested in helping in any way.

More photos from the dedication & celebration of the Julia Brown Asplund Trail Marker



Left - Betsy Carlson at Julia Brown Asplund marker dedication.

Right - Jeanne Logsdon and other spectators observe the marker dedication on UNM campus.



UNM Hodgkin Hall where the Julia Brown Asplund Trail Marker reception was held.

LWVCNM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Starlyn Brown

1st Co-Vice Presidents/Voter Guide:
Karen Wentworth & Lani Desaulniers

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3rd Vice President/Program:
Karen Douglas

4th Vice President/Development:
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Terry Quinn

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Jennifer Black

Director/Webmaster/Zoom Host: Linda Miller

Voter Guide Distribution: Ellen Kelly

Advocacy Team/Observer Corps:
Karen Wentworth

Volunteer Coordinator:
Linda Miller

If you need help with Zoom,
please reach out to Zoom host, Linda Miller,
lmiller@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

September 4th (Wednesday) 5:30 pm
LWVCNM Board Meeting, ZOOM until further notice.
All members welcome.

September 10th (Tuesday) 4:00-6:00 PM
Voter Registration Event
The League will be registering voters at a free event in Tiguex Park in conjunction with a Dignity Not Detention bill and Week of Action event.

September 12th (Thursday) 12 Noon
LWVCNM Monthly Educational Meeting
In person and ZOOM
Topic: Ranked Choice Voting as an alternative to the current expensive runoff elections.
Presenters: Shannon Kunkel, Katharine Clark, and Christine Rivera

September 18th (Wednesday) 3:30 PM
Special Film Event : JOIN OR DIE, a documentary based on the **November Book Club selection, Bowling Alone**
Location: Guild Cinema 3405 Central Avenue NE
See page 5 for ticket information
Optional LWVCNM Happy Hour after at O'Neill's Pub

September 25th (Wednesday) 5:30-7:30 p.m.
LWVCNM Book Club: *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*
by Heather McGhee.
Location: Park Plaza 1331 Park Ave SW, Albuquerque, 87102

October 10th (Thursday) 12 Noon
LWVCNM Monthly Educational Meeting
In person and ZOOM
Topic: The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on the 2024 Election".
Presenter: Professor Huiping Cao, NMSU Department of Computer Science

October 27th (Sunday) 2 PM
Performance: *What the Constitution Means to Me*
Written by Heidi Schreck, Directed by Leslee Richards
followed by Talkback session
Where: The Vortex Theater, 2900 Carlisle Blvd NE
See page 6 for ticket information
Optional LWVCNM Happy Hour afterwards at Canteen
Brewhouse, 2381 Aztec Rd NE

Public Safety in NM: The Revolving Door and Competency - by Karen M Douglas

The NM Governor's & Albuquerque Mayor Keller's Town Hall on Public Safety on July 29, 2024 included representatives from the Albuquerque Police Department, Albuquerque Fire and Rescue, Albuquerque Community Safety, District Attorney, Public Defender, and other officials available to address public comments. Following the Governor's initial discussion of disappointment with the July Special NM Legislative Session's failure to consider public safety bills, officials present offered their comments. Members of the public speaking during the Town Hall expressed diverse views with many commenting on the "revolving door" permitting suspects to repeatedly be released back into the community with a brief discussion of "competency" determination necessary for prosecution. Additional public views on homelessness and appropriate remedies were voiced with related concerns among businesses and residents. Numerous comments reflected the lack of adequate mental health resources available. Residents and business owners commented that crime was impacting their freedom to walk in their neighborhoods or operate a profitable business. Parents expressed fears of taking their children to public parks or schools.

The July 25, 2024 Albuquerque Community Policing Council meeting addressed the relationship between public safety, competency, and the "revolving door." Experts explaining the aspects considered when determining competency included:

Sara Millsbaugh, PhD psychologist specializing in competency determinations,
Karl Swanson, JD 2nd Judicial District, Assistant DA involved in prosecutions, and
Tess Williams, JD, Mental Health attorney, Law Office of the Public Defender.

It was explained that suspects deemed incompetent to stand trial due to mental health issues or substance abuse cannot be tried and may be released. If the suspect is subsequently detained in MDC for over 3 months, substance abuse is no longer a valid concern. Competency evaluations can be performed by a court clinic, however, there is a month's long backlog for appointments and a 4-year waiting period for a trial. The July 2024 NM Special Session was expected to address competency determinations.

Competency evaluations can be performed; however, it is difficult to locate resources for individuals if substance abuse is not a factor. Defendants require factual knowledge of court decisions and rational understanding of court proceedings. Prosecutors/DA must ensure due process and the defendant must have competency to understand punishment.

The US and NM Constitutions provide that a criminal defendant's due process is violated if they are incompetent to stand trial. Bernco.gov now has greater than 300 active felony cases in need of competency evaluation and greater than 200 cases inactive with individuals redirected to diversionary treatment. Defendants are interviewed by attorneys, a judge, and DA who each give an opinion (don't find them incompetent).

Where defendants are not found competent, the process does not indicate that the individual is "not held accountable." Following outpatient treatment these individuals may be "treated back to competency" and charged if dangerous. If a "dangerous" determination results, high security measures are employed with a 9-month treatment program. NM has only one competency evaluation program meeting the Behavioral Health Institute requirements and has no outpatient treatment program.

The Metropolitan Detention Center provides acute care to stabilize treatment on release, but this condition is not sustainable. During the competency process Defense/Prosecution/Judge review forensic reports, criminal history and may also order a medical evaluation to identify solutions appropriate to the case.

During the height of the Covid pandemic many mental health resources became unavailable and have never been reestablished. Review of police officer training standards is also necessary. New Mexico needs to create a more efficient and fairer system.

OBSERVER REPORTS



Observer Corps Report – Albuquerque City Council meeting

5 August 2024

Mary Mulvany /Janet Kirkpatrick

The City Council held no meetings in July. All nine councilors were present at the Aug 5 meeting, with the exception of Council President Lewis who was absent (excused) late in the meeting: 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.

The Aug 5, 2024 Albuquerque City Council meeting lasted over eight hours, adjourning at 1:18 am. Several community members speaking during the general comment period mentioned that the late meetings are a barrier to public participation. One wondered if the council meetings should be weekly to better address the many agenda items.

General Public Comment Items:

Shooting Range. Three community members spoke about the condition of the City's shooting range. They complained of dirty classrooms, mouse droppings, non-functional bathrooms, and unreliable air conditioning. The Parks and Recreation Director responded that progress is being made on a contract to upgrade the facility.

Homelessness. Ten community members spoke about a perceived lack of help and compassion for the unhoused/unsheltered people in our community. Several mentioned the weaponization of law enforcement during sweeps of encampments and likened it to forced displacement.

Election Threshold Proposition – Mayor's Veto Sustained

During the June 17 meeting the council passed a bill to place a proposition on the ballot in November to remove the required minimum number of votes required for election of a mayor or council candidate. The Mayor vetoed this bill. At the August 5 meeting, Council President Dan Lewis made a motion to override the Mayor's veto. Seven community members spoke in support of the Mayor's veto. No one spoke in favor of overriding the veto.

Although the council originally passed the bill with enough yes votes to override the veto, the motion to override failed. Councilors Bassan, Champine, Grout, Lewis, and Sanchez voted to override the veto. Councilors Baca, Fiebelkorn, Peña, and Rogers voted to sustain the veto. Councilor Peña, provided no explanation about why she originally voted in support of the ballot proposition, but now voted against it.

Affordable Housing

The city council unanimously approved the West Mesa Ridge A Development Agreement with YES Housing, Inc. to utilize Housing Forward funds towards new construction of an affordable housing project. The project will provide 128 affordable housing units at 701 Coors Blvd NW. A link to the legislation: [EC-158](#)

Electric-Assisted Bikes on Open Space Trails

The city council considered a bill to allow e-bikes on trails where regular bikes are already allowed. Ten community members spoke in favor of the bill stating that e-bikes provide greater access to older or less-fit people and that e-bikes are capped at 20 mph. Nine people spoke against it, citing safety

concerns and stated that there was not sufficient public notice of this bill and that the process lacked sufficient public input. Councilor Bassan defended the process stating that the bill had been worked in committee for months and that she had spoken to several community groups.

The bill passed by a vote of eight in favor (Baca, Bassan, Champine, Grout, Lewis, Peña, Rogers, Sanchez) and one opposed (Fiebelkorn). The bill was sent to the mayor for signature. A link to the legislation: [O-24-14](#)

Albuquerque Minimum Wage Ordinance

Councilor Rogers proposed a bill which would make the city's minimum wage law consistent with the state law. The current Albuquerque minimum wage is \$8.50, but Albuquerque employers must pay the state minimum of \$12. Councilor Grout proposed an amendment to Rogers' bill that would also make the Albuquerque minimum wage for tipped employees consistent with the state's minimum. Albuquerque's current minimum wage for tipped employees is \$7.20, but the state's minimum is \$3. This could result in a loss of pay for tipped employees if employers choose to implement the reduction. Five members of the community spoke in favor of Councilor Grout's amendment. All five were restaurant owners.

Councilor Rogers moved to withdraw her bill, but this attempt was voted down. Councilor Peña moved that a vote on the bill be deferred to the August 19th meeting because the amendment reducing the minimum wage for tipped employees had not previously been announced and those potentially impacted had no time to speak against it. The deferral motion passed by a vote of five in favor (Baca, Bassan, Fiebelkorn, Peña, Rogers) and four opposed (Champine, Grout, Lewis, Sanchez). Link to legislation: [O-24-21](#)

Bike and Scooter Rentals

Councilors unanimously voted to pass an ordinance reducing fees for shared bike and scooter businesses to operate in the city. The ordinance outlines fees, maintenance requirements, and tracking of the bikes/scooters. Six people spoke in favor of the ordinance, including a representative of a major rental business; and no one spoke against it. Councilor Fiebelkorn, who introduced the bill said she expected a rental operator to apply within the week if this passed. Link to legislation: [O-24-23](#)



Observer Corps Report – Bernalillo County Commission

13 August 2024

Karen Wentworth

Bernalillo County Struggles with Ways to Aid Non-Profits

All five members of the Bernalillo County Commission Barbara Baca, Eric Olivas, Adrian Barboa, Walt Benson and Steven Quezada were present at the August 13 County Commission meeting.

Bernalillo County Commissioners are struggling with a way to assist non-profit organizations without derailing the county budget process. Their problem is a \$1.2 million dollar capital outlay grant from the state legislature to purchase a building at 2051 Wyoming Blvd. NE for the use of Wings for Life International, a non-profit organization that aids the families of recently released detention center inmates. The non-profit provides training and support for released inmates and their families.

The county agreed to act as the fiscal agent for the property, which means it is not only responsible for

actually purchasing the property for use by the non-profit, but it is also legally responsible for upkeep, liability and any needed renovation of the property. A proposed lease agreement making the non-profit responsible for maintenance of the property may partially defray the costs to the county, but county employees will still be responsible for making sure the non-profit lives up to the lease, and county taxpayers are still on the hook for any major repairs that might be needed.

Commissioners said it is the first time the county has actually purchased property for use by a non-profit entity, but smaller purchases over the years are already causing problems. A refrigerator purchased for use by a non-profit in 2015 is still on the books as belonging to Bernalillo County and county employees visit the non-profit each year to make sure the refrigerator is still on the property and in running condition. That's just one example of the long-term concerns caused by the county's willingness to act as a fiscal agent for private entities.

Any local government would struggle to handle unexpected non-funded mandates placed on taxpayers, but that's exactly what the State of New Mexico's Capital Improvement Program and state lawmakers who funded the grant have done in this case.

Two other counties in New Mexico, Doña Ana and San Juan also act as fiscal agents for some non-profits, but non-profit organizations in smaller counties can't use this funding mechanism because smaller counties don't have sufficient staff to accept the additional responsibilities.

The League policy that is relevant to this issue can be found in the Local Government section of the handbook that outlines local Central New Mexico positions. It says "support for the development of budgets that provide for long-range planning and evaluation programs."



Observer Report - Sandoval County Commission regular meeting

24 July 2024

Mary Templeton, observer

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

Description of Issues Relevant to the League

Waste Management

The Commission heard a presentation from PlastikGas, a company that builds plants that convert waste plastic into biofuels and sells the plants to public and private sectors. The Commission is analyzing the pros and cons of this approach for reducing waste in the County landfill.

As background:

LWVUS promotes policies to reduce the generation of solid and hazardous wastes and promote their reuse and recycling.

Affordable Housing

The commission adopted an ordinance to issue bonds to fund construction of Sandoval Flats - a 216-unit low-income housing project to be built and managed by Dominion Group, Inc.

(https://www.rrobserver.com/business/county-oks-intent-to-issue-revenue-bonds-for-218-unit-housing-complex/article_c968d4e3-1ee6-50ac-9470-38f72dac18b7.html).

The 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom units would be rented to applicants making 60% or less of the area median income at rents \$200 below market value. Rent would not be government subsidized.

As background:

The LWWUS supports policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family. In addition, the LWWNM supports current and future efforts to increase the availability of safe, decent, and affordable housing for moderate and low-income households through

- increased options for seniors, the disabled, and first-time homebuyers
- promoting a variety of housing styles and types for rent and for purchase that are integrated within communities
- supporting policies that link transportation, land use, and affordable housing.

LWVCNM recognizes the responsibility of local government for making available, facilitating, and coordinating provision of affordable, decent, and safe housing using federal, state, county, or city funds.

General Obligation Bond Questions

The Commission unanimously voted to approve general obligation bond questions for libraries (\$3.1M), EMS water storage and communications (\$11.2M = \$6.2M Y1 + \$5M Y2), animal shelter (\$7.5M), and public works (\$2.6M). The questions have been written, but are not yet posted on the County website.

Additional Comments

Public Comment

Four of 14 speakers commenting requested an increase in the County Library Bond to be voted on in November. Three addressed staff, administration, and union issues at Sandoval Regional Medical Center. One speaker appeared to campaign for a presidential candidate and was not interrupted.

Sandoval County Commission Website

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



Observer Report - Sandoval County Commission regular meeting

August 14, 2024

Mary Templeton, observer

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

Three of 10 speakers expressed concern about election fraud in past and upcoming elections.

Video playback errors prevented viewing an economic development presentation near the beginning of the meeting.

Sandoval County Commission Website

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

League of Women Voters Of Central New Mexico
6739 Academy Rd. NE, Suite 124
Albuquerque, NM 87109

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.