

LWVCNM Observer's Report

Sandoval County Commission regular meeting

November 13, 2024

Mary Templeton, observer

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

Description of Issues Relevant to the League

Behavioral Health Programs

Sandoval Regional Medical Center (SRMC) partners with the City of Rio Rancho around Behavioral Health. All Rio Rancho Police Department (RRPD) officers have received Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training and RRPD now has a dedicated CIT of two officers plus a behavioral health clinician provided by SMRC who respond to behavioral health needs in Rio Rancho.

An additional program is funded for SMRC to train and deploy full-time behavioral health response teams county-wide, which will reduce the number of public safety officers responding to behavioral health incidents, and will provide specialized care for those who need it. This program begins January 2025.

SRMC will restart a program with the county jail that follows up with inmates with behavioral health needs to connect them with resources, reducing ineffective use of the jail.

Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) program provides comprehensive outpatient mental health care, substance abuse services and screening. They replace Kennedy-era mental health programs.

As background:

LWVUS promotes a health care system for the United States that provides a basic level of quality care for all U.S. residents, including behavioral health that is integrated with and achieves parity with the physical health care system. The LWVNM expects state and local governments to support an adequately funded mental health care system that provides comprehensive services, as does the LWVCNM.

Elections

The Commission voted on a resolution to establish its legislative priorities for the 2025 state session. One commissioner moved to amend the resolution, asked that an item reading

Per Board of County Commissioners Resolution 6.22.22.10, legislation that calls for improvements in voter processes including: Photo ID, Efficient Removal of Inactive

Voters, Prohibiting the Use of Unsupervised Ballot Drop Boxes, Absentee Ballot Chain of Custody, and Post-election Audits.

be deleted from the list because requiring photo IDs serve to disenfranchise many of his constituents who live in the pueblos and reservations where it is often difficult to obtain a government-issued photo ID.

The County Manager pointed out that because the County identified Voter ID as a legislative priority in a separate resolution, removing it from the current resolution would not omit it as a County legislative priority. Another commissioner mentioned that other activities, such as removing inactive voters and post-election audits are currently in progress.

The commission voted 3 to 2 along party lines against this amendment. In response, another commissioner gave a sweeping historic overview of how voting rights have been denied to many in the US from 1789 to the present. This valuable summary is viewable on video here:

<https://sandovalcountynm.new.swagit.com/videos/320161> (beginning 1:48:26)

The resolution establishing the 2025 legislative priorities, with the above text included, passed 3 to 2 along party lines.

As background:

LWVUS supports electoral systems that encourage participation, are verifiable and auditable, and enhance representation for all voters. LWVNM supports the protection of the right of every citizen to vote, and methods that increase voter participation, including automatic voter registration and same-day voter registration.

To better understand voter suppression on tribal lands, see the American Bar Association article [How the Native American Vote Continues to be Suppressed](#). A [2024 Pew Research Center](#) study showed that 81% of Americans (69% of Democrats and 95% of Republicans) support requiring all voters to show government-issued photo identification to vote.

Additional Comments

Taxation

Property tax exemptions passed during the 2024 General Election must make their way through the state legislature before residents can apply for them.

Public Comment

Two of nine speakers commented on elections. Two others purported that a crime syndicate took over the U.S. Government in 1871, but Trump will restore the original government.

Commissioner Discussion

The County Clerk mentioned that they were still counting ballots on November 13th.

One commissioner reminded people that while some voting requirements are easily satisfied by some voters, they remain barriers to others. She also voiced hope that the lobbyist will focus on the priorities that the entire commission agrees on in the upcoming legislative session.

Sandoval County Commission Website

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