

The VOTER

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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF CENTRAL NEW MEXICO

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President's Report by Starlyn Brown

Looking Ahead to a Busy and Impactful 2026

We had a wonderful holiday party at Karen Douglas's home, and it was such a pleasure to spend time catching up with so many members. I hope everyone enjoyed the celebration as much as I did. It was a warm and joyful way to close out the year.

As we look ahead, 2026 promises to be a very busy and important year for LWVCNM, with much work ahead of us. The 2026 legislative session begins on January 20 at noon, and our advocacy efforts are already underway. In December, I emailed members about LWVCNM joining the Freedom to Read New Mexico Coalition (FTRNM). As part of this effort, I asked members to write to the Governor urging her to include consideration of three key bills during the session. The content of that email appears on page 3. If you haven't yet had an opportunity to write your letter, or were unaware of this initiative, I encourage you to send one now. Every voice matters.

Another legislative-focused effort is taking shape through a new coalition that includes the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government (NMFOG), the New Mexico Environmental Law Center, and Common Cause. This coalition is focused on increasing public access to legislative sessions. During the upcoming session, they are seeking volunteers to help collect both objective and subjective data. While full details are still forthcoming, I know several members have already expressed interest. If you would like to learn more or participate, please send me an email.

Reminder – the League Legislative Reception is January 29th, and League Day at the Legislature is January 30th.

You will also be hearing more about **Semi-Open Primaries**. Another coalition has formed to educate New Mexicans about this new law, and I am participating as a representative of both LWVNM and LWVCNM. This educational work will be especially important as we head into the primary election cycle.

Planning for the 2026 Primary Election will begin in late February or early March. In some races, the primary election will effectively determine the winner of the general election. Numerous state offices will be on the ballot, including Governor. Producing the Voter Guide is one of our most important

responsibilities, and it requires a significant team effort. There are many roles—large and small—and I encourage you to consider volunteering.

Work on the Primary Voter Guide will roll directly into preparation for the November General Election Voter Guide, which we plan to print. In addition, we intend to participate in every voter and civic education opportunity that arises across our four counties.

The more our members are involved, the more we can do to defend democracy and educate New Mexicans. I am always available to answer questions, listen to concerns, and learn more about the issues that matter most to you. Please don't hesitate to reach out at president@lwvcnm.org.

Together, we can make 2026 a powerful year for civic engagement and democratic participation.

Join us for the **Brown Bag Lunch and Learn Series**

JANUARY EDUCATIONAL MEETING **January 8th, at Noon**



WHERE: LWVCNM Offices Conference Room, 6739 Academy Rd. NE, ample parking available;

In person (members and guests only); Zoom (members, guests, and general public)

TOPIC: League Priorities for the 2026 Legislative Session

SPEAKER: Dick Mason, longtime LWVCNM & LWWNM member & NM Legislative Action Committee leader

Central New Mexico member and LWWNM Action Committee member Dick Mason will speak to the General Meeting at noon on January 8, about League Priorities for the upcoming 2026 NM Legislative Session, a short-session which commences on January 20, 2026, and closes on February 19, 2026.

Dick is a long-time member of the League and has led the NM Legislative Action Committee for the state League in cooperation with Akkana Peck from the Los Alamos League for the past several years. His interest has been in health care, but he champions all League priorities before the legislative committees.

If you have ever wondered how the LWWNM sets legislative priorities or how you can become more involved in championing issues before the lawmakers, this will be an opportunity to find out how to get involved.

The 2026 session of the legislature will be a 30-day session, primarily focused on the state budget. But the way a state constructs its budget reflects the priorities of the citizens. There will also be some specific issues the governor will place on the call to the legislature dealing with particular concerns.

Freedom to Read New Mexico (FTRNM)

In early December, LWVCNM joined the **Freedom to Read New Mexico (FTRNM) Coalition** because our First Amendment rights are under increasing threat. The coalition was formed to protect the First Amendment, civil rights, and the right of every New Mexican to access books in public, school, academic, tribal, and rural libraries.

Access to information is not a privilege — it is a fundamental right. It is enshrined in the First Amendment and deeply tied to civil rights. Everyone deserves fair, equitable access to resources in public institutions, free from discrimination and political influence. When books are removed or access is restricted, serious concerns about equality and civil rights arise.

Freedom to Read New Mexico is working to ensure that legislation providing lasting legal protections for readers, students, libraries, and communities is advanced during the **2026 Legislative Session**. These rights already exist — now we must protect them. This effort is about supporting diverse voices, preserving history, and ensuring everyone has the opportunity to learn, grow, and fully participate in society.

What you read — and what your children read — should be **your decision**, not someone else's.

In addition to outright book bans, librarians across New Mexico are facing harassment and pressure through “soft censorship” and other tactics. Librarians are trained professionals who take their responsibilities seriously, and there are already robust procedures in place to review books and materials in public libraries. When books are removed outside of these established professional guidelines, it affects the rights of the entire community.

This is where you come in.

Three bills will be ready for introduction in the 2026 legislative session **IF** the Governor sends a message adding them to the session. I am asking you to write to Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and urge her to do just that — send a message to the House and Senate requesting that these bills be included.

This is an opportunity for the Governor to leave a lasting legacy affirming that New Mexico values learning, diversity, libraries, and civil rights. But first, she needs to hear from us.

There is no form letter. Please send a **personal letter or postcard**, in your own words and your own voice. If you have a story, please include it. It is important to share why protecting books, preserving history, supporting libraries and librarians, and making your own decisions about what is appropriate for you or your children matters to you. Access to books that reflect who we are and what we experience matters to all of us.

Governor's Address:

The Office of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham
490 Old Santa Fe Trail, Room 400
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Thank you for standing up for the freedom to read and for helping protect the rights of all New Mexicans.

Upcoming LWVCNM Program Events - Karen Douglas, VP/Program

February 2026 Educational Meeting

The **February 26, 2026**, LWVCNM Educational Meeting (*please note the revised date*) will feature Bob Perls addressing Semi Open Primaries and the recent passage of SB16, permitting independent and Decline to State voters to participate in NM primary elections. The address by Perls, the Founder and President of the non-profit New Mexico Open Elections for 10 years will include the impact of this legislation and the task of educating the electorate to fully exercise this option.

This will be a hybrid meeting at 12:00 PM with in-person attendance in the LWVCNM conference room at 6739 Academy Blvd NE.

2026 Annual Program Planning Event

The Zoom only LWVCNM Program Planning meeting will be held **Saturday, February 21st** from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM and offers members the opportunity to supplement our current LWV Positions to exert more influence through advocacy to increase our impact on our government and society. More information will be available in the February VOTER, and on the LWVCNM website.

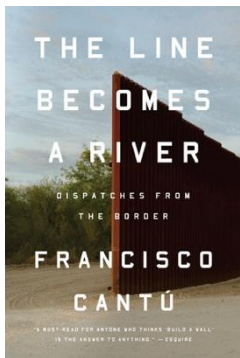
The LWVCNM Book Club

meets the 4th Wednesday of each odd-numbered month

New members are always welcome!

If you are not able to complete a book before the session, no worries . . . join a session and complete the book at your convenience.

Great conversation, light snacks, and a way to better get to know LWVCNM members.



Our Next Selection:

Date: **Wednesday, January 28, 2026**

Time: **5:30 pm**

Location: **LWVCNM Office Conference Room - 6739 Academy Rd NE**

Title: ***The Line Becomes A River – Dispatches from the Border* by Francisco Cantú**

This book was a finalist for the 2019 New Mexico Book Award.

According to the publisher, the author served as an agent for the US Border Patrol and is a former Fulbright fellow and the recipient of a 2017 Whiting Award.

Currently an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Arizona, Cantú also co-coordinates the Field Studies in Writing Program and the DETAINED archive, an asylum seekers' oral history project.

Contact Janet at 505-401-2052 for questions.





The holiday party was a huge success!

Thanks go to Karen for hosting the party in her lovely home, and to all for the time and energy that you put into making it a successful and thoroughly enjoyable event!



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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

Jan 5th (Wednesday) 5:30 pm
**LWVCNM Board Meeting,
ZOOM until further notice.**

Jan 8th (Thursday) 12 Noon
**LWVCNM Monthly Educational Meeting
In person and ZOOM
Topic: Priorities for Upcoming Legislative
Session
Speaker: Dick Mason, LWVNM NM**

Jan 20th (Tuesday) 12 Noon
Opening Day - 2026 NM Legislative Session

Jan 28th (Wednesday) 5:30 PM
**LWVCNM Book Club
LWVCNM Office Conference Room -
See info on p. 4**

Jan 29th (Thursday) 5:30 pm
**League Legislative Reception
Santa Fe, La Fonda
All members welcome.**

Jan 30th (Friday) 9am
**League Day at the Legislature
All members welcome.**

Feb 4th (Wednesday) 5:30 pm
**LWVCNM Board Meeting,
ZOOM until further notice.**

Feb 19th (Thursday) 12 Noon
Closing Day – 2026 NM Legislative Session

Feb 21st (Saturday) 10 AM - 12 Noon
**2026 Annual LWVCNM Program Planning Event
Virtual only
More information in Feb. Voter and web**

NOTE THE DIFFERENT DATE!

Feb 26th (Thursday) 12 Noon
**LWVCNM Monthly Educational Meeting
In person and ZOOM
Topic: Semi Open Primaries in New Mexico
Speaker: Bob Perls, NM Open Elections**

OBSERVER REPORTS



Observer Corps Report – Albuquerque City Council meeting

Nov 17 / Dec 01 / Dec 15 2025

Mary Mulvany /Janet Kirkpatrick

All nine councilors were present for the Nov 17, Dec 01, and Dec 15 meetings. Councilors: 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.

General Public Comment

Speakers were allowed two minutes for comment.

At each of the three meetings, members of the public spoke to urge councilors to create legislation authorizing **ranked choice voting**: six on Nov 17, seven on Dec 01, and five on Dec 15. No one spoke in opposition. They cited the expense of an additional run-off election, the increase in negative campaign tactics, increased election fatigue among the electorate, reduced turnout in runoff elections, and pointed to the success of ranked choice voting in Santa Fe and Los Cruces. One speaker from Common Cause demonstrated how ranked choice voting works using Duplos (large square Lego blocks). See his demonstration at the 39 minute/55 second mark of the 01 Dec meeting YouTube video: ([Link to Ranked Choice Duplo demo](#))

Two speakers at the Dec 15 meeting alleged messages sent to some voters in District 3 were designed to intimidate voters. These messages falsely stated that ICE (Immigrations and Customs Enforcement) officers had been seen at the 98th St polling location.

Artificial Intelligence Policy EC-25-85

At the Nov 17 meeting, the City administration presented the results of the Artificial Intelligence Working Group's (AIWG) recommendations on AI policy. AWIG is comprised of various stakeholders, including community organizations, academia, industry, city staff, and subject-matter experts. The report is quite thorough and can be viewed at this link: ([EC-25-85](#)).

Budget Process Amendment

At the Dec 15 meeting, the Council voted to amend the City's Code of Ordinances to enhance transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the budgeting process. This reflects months of work by the Council and Administration staffs to refine communication processes between the Council and Administration. Eight Councilors voted in favor (Baca, Bassan, Champine, Grout, Lewis, Peña, Rogers, and Sanchez) and one opposed (Fiebelkorn). The legislation was sent to the mayor for signature on Dec 22. Link: ([O-24-67](#))



Observer Corps Report – Bernalillo County Commission

December 2025

Karen Wentworth

Bernalillo County Commission Begins Setting up Safe Spaces for Immigrants

Present for Nov. 18 and Dec. 10 meetings: Barbara Baca, District 1; Frank Baca, District 2; Adriann Barboa, District 3; Walt Benson, District 4; Eric Olivas, District 5

The commissioners in Bernalillo County have passed a “Safe Spaces” ordinance that is designed to give undocumented residents of the county some refuge in case of Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs check of documents within the county.

The ordinance designates four types of areas as “Safe Spaces.”

- Public Service Space – including government buildings, and disaster or emergency response sites. It is not yet clear whether state- or federally-owned buildings will be impacted by this ordinance.
- Resource Providers – including community resource centers, legal services providers, homeless shelters and violence service providers.
- Work Areas – work zones and construction sites on county property.
- Private Spaces – The county manager has 30 days to develop policies for businesses seeking registration and the appropriate signage indicating private spaces. This would apply to businesses with five or more employees seeking registration to adopt a safety plan to protect against unwanted law enforcement intrusion into private spaces.

This generally aligns with the U.S. League of Women Voters stand on Immigration:

“The League of Women Voters believes that immigration policies should promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business and employment needs of the United States; and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises. Provision should also be made for qualified persons to enter the United States on student visas. All persons should receive fair treatment under the law.... In transition to a reformed system, the League supports provisions for individuals already living in the country without permission to earn legal status.”

The county is also continuing to press ahead on putting together tax breaks for property developers who include affordable housing space in their projects.

The Behavioral Health Authority underwritten by the county presented a yearly report on how it is spending mental health money on county residents. It currently is using \$9.3 million in special gross receipts tax funds as well as \$893,000 in county indigent funds. The report also revealed that two thirds of the county residents enrolled in various mental health and addiction treatment programs are male.

Interestingly, there was no mention of new resources now in operation by the state of New Mexico, so it is not clear whether the two levels of local government are working together.



Sandoval County Commission regular meeting

December 10, 2025

Mary Templeton, observer (by video recording)

Present: Michael Meek (Chair), Jordan Juarez (Vice Chair), Joshua Jones, Katherine Bruch, Jon Herr

Description of Issues Relevant to the League

Affordable Housing

The Commission voted unanimously to issue revenue obligations to finance the acquisition, rehabilitation, and equipping of an existing 180-unit affordable multifamily housing apartment complex. New rents will be on par with HUD guidelines. Only 9 units are currently vacant; displacement planning is in progress.

As background, the LWWNM supports efforts to increase the availability of safe, decent, and affordable housing for moderate and low-income households through public and private partnerships, rehabilitation, and other strategies.

Additional Comments

Public Comment

Four residents of Placitas requested that the County postpone voting on a request to serve as fiscal agent for the Placitas Art Series, which has received funding for a project that would include a new amphitheater on private land. Community members were concerned about noise, pollution, and resources use, and want the project to do an environmental and cultural impact study beforehand.

As the funding includes money to pay for those studies, the Commission passed an amended request that requires that the County have a second opportunity to vote on fiscal agency if any capital outlays are included in the funding, and after the project goes to Planning and Zoning, since the project would require zoning changes. This would allow the Commission to gather more information.

Sandoval County Commission Website

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



Middle Rio Grande Housing Collaborative (MRGHC)

Affordable Housing Report

November 2025

Janie McGuigan

The MRGHC met at 2:00 pm, Thursday, November 20, 2025 for a regular meeting at the MRCOG Board Room. All five MRGHC Commissioners attended: Talia Friedman (Chair), Dan Majewski, Ian Robertson, Lawrence Rael, and Steve Anaya. Other attendees included: Yasine Armstrong, Executive Director of the MRGHC; Cindy Chavez, Bernalillo County Manager; Marcos Gonzales, Economic Development Director; Ellen Braden, City of Albuquerque; and Abigail Stiles, Senior Policy Analyst, City of Albuquerque.

As a recap, the September 25 meeting highlights included: 1) Yasmine Armstrong reported that she is undertaking strategic outreach to key NM Legislative officials in preparation for the 2026 Legislative session; 2) Cindy Chavez reported that both the City and County had received their 2025 legislative allocations and had signed intergovernmental agreements with State of New Mexico Workforce Solutions; 3) a proposal was approved by the Commissioners to extend the fiscal agent agreement between the MRCOG and the MRGHC until September 30, 2026; and, 4) Y. Armstrong proposed and the Commissioners agreed to move to a bi-monthly meeting schedule to allow more time for work to be completed between meetings and that the meeting start time be changed to 2:00 pm.

At the November 20, 2025 MRGHC meeting, the Commissioners approved the September 25 meeting minutes as recapped above. The County housing update for November was provided by Cindy Chavez. Chavez reported that gap financing would be offered to the following housing projects: Tierra Linda, Lomas Tower and West Mesa A & B. Additional County funding will be used to support Transitional housing programs as well as Homeowner rehabilitation, and Rapid Rehousing for persons who are homeless. The County has instituted a 'Good Neighbor Agreement' to ensure that tenants and property managers alike uphold applicable housing codes, maintain the property, and prevent nuisance issues such as criminal activities, loitering and urban camping.

The City housing funds update for November reported that the vast majority of funds are targeted to the City's Gateway System including: 1) support for the Young Adult housing and treatment center, 2) Men's and Women's behavioral health treatment, 3) Gateway West facility improvements and operations support, and, 4) remodeling of the First Responders Receiving Area, and the Medical Respite Facility. City Staff also reported that Albuquerque City Councilors Baca, Fiebelkorn and Rogers are developing a list of housing related capital outlay requests to seek from the 2026 State Legislature. It was noted that these 2025 NM Legislative funds allocated to the City and County are one-time non-recurring funds and that Workforce Solutions Secretary Nair has asked for a succession plan to support the Gateway System's ongoing operations.

Other discussions by the Commissioners included concerns about the significant increase in the Albuquerque Point in Time Count of homeless persons; the increase and impact of 'out of state' persons migrating to the City; and, that the lack of housing for all income levels is so critical that it has become an economic development issue and is inhibiting the recruitment of new corporations to New Mexico.

Y. Armstrong also reported that she is finalizing the MRGHC Bylaws for review and approval at the January 22 meeting and will be continuing conversations with Secretary Nair to request an additional \$110M state allocation for the MRGHC during the 2026 New Mexico Legislative Session. Armstrong will be developing a brochure that explains the purpose and accomplishments of the MRGHC to educate legislators.

The next MRGHC meeting date will be Thursday, January 22, 2026 @ 2pm at MRCOG Board Room.

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'll 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.



**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.