



The VOTER

MARCH 2026

VOL. 91 NO. 3

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF CENTRAL NEW MEXICO

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

President's Report by Starlyn Brown

Women's History Month: Leading the Change

March is Women's History Month, and this year's theme—*Leading the Change: Women Shaping a Sustainable Future*—reflects work we strive to advance every day at LWVCNM.

To celebrate, LWVCNM is partnering with the 3 Muses Collaborative to present "Failure Is Impossible: A Talk with Susan B. Anthony" on March 14. Anthony, a nineteenth-century activist, became one of the most influential leaders of the women's equality movement and a powerful voice for voting rights.

This special event promises to be both inspiring and timely. Please see page 6 for event details and ticket information. LWVCNM members receive a discount— I hope to see you there!

Semi-Open Primaries: Expanding Voter Participation

You will be hearing—and seeing—a lot about Semi-Open Primaries this year. LWVCNM has officially launched our voter education efforts to ensure New Mexicans understand this significant change.

There are approximately 328,000 non-party affiliated registered voters in New Mexico, and many may never have voted in a primary election before. Were you aware that nearly 80% of races are decided in a primary? With Semi-Open Primaries, non-affiliated voters can now easily participate in primary elections—an important step toward a more inclusive democracy.

We've developed a flyer, launched a webpage, and are incorporating this message into every outreach opportunity. This is a meaningful change in our election process, and you can help by sharing the information in your conversations with friends, family, and colleagues. Word of mouth remains one of the most powerful tools we have.

New Mexico Legislature Update: HJR5 Legislative Compensation

New Mexico is currently the last state in the country that does not pay its legislators a salary. That means we operate with a fully volunteer Legislature – a system that can limit who is able to serve.
(cont.)

After years of advocacy and discussion, House Joint Resolution 5 (HJR5), the Legislative Compensation Constitutional Amendment, has passed. The proposed constitutional amendment will appear on the November 2026 General Election ballot.

This is what Hannah Burling, President LWVNM sent during the session encouraging legislators to vote yes.

“The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports legislative compensation that is fair and reasonable, recognizing that there is a cost to government and that the cost should be paid by the state (taxpayers) of New Mexico. It’s time to create more opportunities for New Mexicans to serve in the Legislature as well as reduce the influence of special interest.”

HJR5 is a significant step forward for democracy in our state. Providing compensation to legislators would make public service more accessible and open the door for more New Mexicans to run for and serve as State Senators and Representatives.

LWVCNM will launch an educational campaign about this Constitutional Amendment later this year. For now, perhaps add it to your conversations as well.

SAVE THE DATE – LWVCNM Annual Meeting May 9, 2026

Mark your calendars! The LWVCNM Annual Meeting will be held on May 9, 2026, at UNM Continuing Education, located on University Boulevard near Indian School in Albuquerque.

We are currently finalizing the details—but yes, there will be food!

The Annual Meeting is one of the most important events of the year for our League. As our official business meeting, members will:

- Elect board members
- Vote on a two-year budget
- Consider and vote on Bylaws and Policy changes
- Have an opportunity to give directions and feedback to the board

Your participation as a voting member is essential. The strength and direction of LWVCNM depend on engaged members who help shape our leadership, priorities, and policies. This is your opportunity to take part in guiding the future of our organization.

Be on the lookout for the April *Voter* newsletter, which will serve as the official Annual Meeting Call. It will be mailed to members around the second week of April and will include full details about the agenda and meeting materials.

We look forward to gathering together, conducting the important business of the League, and celebrating the work we are doing to strengthen democracy in New Mexico.

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

MARCH EDUCATIONAL MEETING

Thursday, March 12th at Noon



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

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

TOPIC: *New Mexico's Legislature: Is It or Is It Not Committed to Transparency?*

SPEAKER: Christine Barber, Executive Director, New Mexico Foundation for Open Government (NMFOG)

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

The League of Women Voters has long been committed to transparency. The LWVUS national public policy position on *Citizen's Right to Know/Public Participation* states:

Protect the citizen's right to know and facilitate informed understanding and public participation in government decision-making.

This position is expanded upon in the LWVUS *Impact on Issues 2024-2026*:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation at all levels of government. The League further believes that governmental bodies must protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.

And, fifteen years ago, LWVNM adopted a comprehensive position on *Transparency in State and Local Government*.

Our Sunshine Month speaker will share information about whether the New Mexico Legislature has a full-throated commitment to transparency equal to that of the League.

During her presentation to the League of Women Voters, Christine Barber will discuss a new project examining public access to the New Mexico Legislature during legislative sessions.

While every public body in New Mexico — including county commissions, city councils and water districts — is required to conduct business at public meetings and not behind closed doors under the Open Meetings Act, the Legislature is exempt. This lack of statutory transparency raises important questions about what information the public may be missing and whether additional access and accountability measures are needed.



Christine Barber is the executive director of the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government (FOG), a nonpartisan nonprofit that promotes government transparency by helping the public access public records and open meetings.

Before joining FOG, Christine worked as a reporter and editor at newspapers in Gallup, Santa Fe and Albuquerque, and later moved into the nonprofit sector, where she worked with trafficking victims living on the street.

At FOG, she draws on her journalism background to investigate potential violations of New Mexico's Sunshine Laws by state and local governments. Much of her work also focuses on assisting members of the public who contact the FOG helpline when they encounter barriers to accessing government information.

The April Monthly Meeting will be April 9, 2026.

Data Centers and Microgrids in New Mexico: Issues to Address

Data centers are server farms and have been around for decades. But the newest type of data center is called "hyperscale" because very high-capacity server farms are needed for the anticipated growth in artificial intelligence (AI). Hyperscale data centers require vast amounts of electricity and water to operate. The race is on among Big Tech companies to dominate AI so there is enormous pressure to develop data center sites and microgrids to provide electricity.

In New Mexico, Meta established a large data center in Valencia County in 2019 and is expanding there. Three other data centers have recently been announced in southern New Mexico (Project Jupiter in Dona Ana County; Project Zenith in Roswell; and a Lea County data center operated by New Era Energy & Digital). Up to 12 additional sites are in discussion around the state. Questions have been raised about where the electricity and water will come from if these projects go forward. What types of air pollutants might be emitted, including greenhouse gases? What sources of water can be redirected from current uses?

The April 9 educational meeting of LWVCNM will focus on what criteria should be applied to evaluate data center and microgrid development and which public agencies should evaluate and approve them. Experts have been invited to provide information and options at our in-person and Zoom meeting to be held from 12 to 1.

Election Updates

The **Voter Guide** team has started work on the Voter Guide for the June 2nd Primary Election. We plan to use VOTE411, but will also create a PDF and a printed guide this year. We are seeking volunteers, both new and experienced, to help with the guide. There are many tasks to be done, both large and small, for both the Primary and the General Election in November.

We have decided to print a guide for the primary to provide a resource for the cohort of Independent and Declined-to-State (DTS) registered voters, since they will be able to vote in either the Republican or Democratic primary without having to change their registration status. This is due to the new rules for New Mexico's semi-open primaries.

According to data from New Mexico Open Elections (NMOE), Independent and DTS voters in NM are:

35% of young voters. *Young voters (voters under the age of 35) are registered as independent more than with either major party.

41% of young Native voters and 28% of Native voters overall

32% of young Hispanic/Latino voters and 42% of Hispanic/Latino voters overall

The Voter Guide team is **now** seeking help from members to expand our outreach to organizations, institutions, and businesses so that we can provide our VG resources – both print and online -- to a broader audience. We plan to distribute guides to libraries, community and senior centers, campuses, as well as various organizations and businesses.

Ellen Kelly and Pam Wilson are working on the print guide distribution plan and community outreach using Nextdoor, neighborhood associations, clubs, churches, and other organizations. Others are working on expanding our use of social media. Right now, we are especially interested in identifying distribution sites in the South Valley, Sandoval, Torrance, and Valencia Counties. If you have suggestions for new sites or would like to help with scouting out sites for our resources, please contact Pam Wilson (505-331-0936) or Ellen Kelly (505-440-8931).

We will have a very short window of time to contact candidates to answer our questions and to assemble the guide for the printer. We need help from **many** members to make calls/text candidates when the invitations are sent at the end of March, and then to follow up with reminder calls/texts in mid-April for those who have not responded. Again, please contact Pam or Ellen about volunteering for these tasks. In April, we will need a group of proofreaders, and in early May we will need our intrepid drivers to help with the deliveries of the guides to identified locations in Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrance, and Valencia Counties.

We have made some inroads in reducing our production costs for the guide, but there will be additional expenses for the Primary Election guide. Our fundraising team will be working with us to support this effort.

We are truly grateful for the support and dedication of our members to this effort. Please let me know if you would like to volunteer or would like to learn more.

Lani Desaulniers (LMDesaul@aol.com)

— ★ ★ ★ —
**THREE MUSES PERFORMANCE COLLECTIVE
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CENTRAL NEW MEXICO
PRESENT**

**FAILURE IS IMPOSSIBLE:
A TALK WITH SUSAN B. ANTHONY**



SATURDAY MARCH 14, 2026

**4:30 - PRE-SHOW HAPPY HOUR
5:00 - PERFORMANCE
COMMUNITY CONVERSATION TO
FOLLOW THE SHOW**

**Q-STAFF THEATRE
400 BROADWAY BLVD SE
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87102**

AT THE CORNER OF LEAD AND BROADWAY

**LEAGUE MEMBERS SAVE \$2 ON TICKET PURCHASE
ENTER DISCOUNT CODE SUFFRAGE AT CHECKOUT**

— ★ ★ ★ —
**Purchase Tickets [HERE](https://tinyurl.com/3MPC-Tickets) (tinyurl.com/3MPC-Tickets)
Discount code SUFFRAGE**

Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) was a dynamic and eloquent leader of the women's rights movement. Though she did not live to see the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, it was largely through her unflinching efforts that women gained the right to vote.

Guest Artist **Rose Stephenson** brings to life this great leader through her speeches, journal entries, and letters. *Failure is Impossible* will cover the events of Anthony's life from childhood to her death in 1906, as well as her lifelong collaboration and friendship with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other influential women's rights activists.

Immediately following the performance, the League of Women Voters Central NM and guest artist Rose Stephenson will answer questions and lead a community conversation about the history of women's suffrage and current voting rights issues. Volunteers will be on hand to help register voters.

Three Muses Performance Collective is the brainchild of producers Theresa A. Carson, Jane deLaubenfels and Patti Neff-Tiven, who have decades of experience in the creation and production of live arts events including producing, directing, and performing with companies such as Albuquerque Little Theatre, The Vortex and Musical Theatre Southwest in ABQ; Ground Floor Theatre, Fusebox Festival and The Rude Mechs in Austin, TX; and The Artistic Home, Redtwist Theatre, and 2nd Story in Chicago. Three Muses seeks to empower and uplift women's voices and experiences through new, rising, and experimental live performance art.

Rose Stephenson has performed widely in theaters for children and adults. She has presented character portrayals of Susan B. Anthony, Olympia Brown, Carrie Chapman Catt, Louisa May Alcott, and Clara Barton, among others, for schools, libraries, conferences, and groups across the Midwest and beyond for over twenty years. She is a long-time member and avid supporter of the League of Women Voters. Rose lives in Madison, WI with her husband Trevor, a classical pianist and Artistic Director of the Madison Bach Musicians, and their two cats.

The LWVCNM Book Club

meets the 4th Wednesday of each odd-numbered month

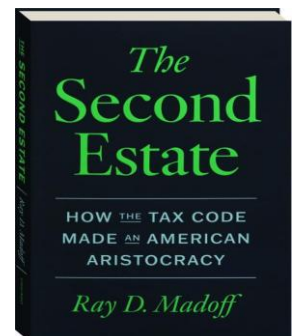
New members are always welcome!

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: *The Second Estate*

Date: Wednesday, March 25, 2026
Time: 5:30 pm
Location: LWVCNM Office Conference Room – 6739 Academy Rd NE
Title: *The Second Estate: How the Tax Code Made an American Aristocracy*



Author Ray Madoff, a Boston College Law Professor, explores the impact of income tax regulations on tax burden and the growing wealth inequality in the United States. She explains how the system shifted from taxing those with the most capacity to pay to one that benefits the richest, and suggests potential reforms.

Her writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *New York Review of Books*, among other outlets.

Contact Janet at 505-401-2052

LWVCNM HAPPY HOUR EVENTS!

THIS MONTH

TUESDAY, MARCH 10

Ponderosa Brewing Co. 4-6pm
1761 Bellamah Ave NW
Celebrate Women's History Month with your League friends!

NEXT MONTH

TUESDAY, APRIL 7

Quarter Celtic Brewpub 4-6 pm
1100 San Mateo Blvd NE
Spring into spring! If the weather is nice, we'll be on the patio!

As with all happy hour events, just drop in. No need to RSVP. Selected pubs always feature beer, wine, cocktails and a full food menu as well as ample parking in a well-lit area. Come relax and enjoy some time together!

LWVCNM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President:
Starlyn Brown

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

2nd Vice President/Membership:
Elizabeth Shields

3rd Vice President/Program:
Karen Douglas

4th Vice President/Development:
Betsy Carlson

Treasurer: Janet Kirkpatrick

Co-Secretaries:
Jane Moore & Lenann McGookey Gardner

Director/Voter Services Chair: Jill Crawley

Director/Sustainability/Climate Change:
Jeanne Logsdon

Director/Office Manager:
Terry Quinn

Director/Historian & Special Projects:
Vacant

Director/Webmaster/Zoom Host: Linda Miller

Voter Guide Distribution: Ellen Kelly

Advocacy Team/Observer Corps:
Karen Wentworth

***Technology/Webmaster/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

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

Mar 10th (Tuesday) 4 pm – 6 pm
LWVCNM Happy Hour
Ponderosa Brewing Co.
See info p. 8

Mar 12th (Thursday) 12 Noon
LWVCNM Monthly Educational Meeting
In person and ZOOM

**Topic: New Mexico's Legislature: Is It or Is It
Not Committed to Transparency?**
**Speaker: Christine Barber, Executive
Director, New Mexico Foundation for Open
Government (NMFOG)**
See info p. 3

Mar 14th (Saturday) 4:30 pm
**Failure is Impossible: An Evening with
Susan B. Anthony**
Pre-Show Happy Hour at 4:30PM
Performance at 5:00 pm
See info p. 6

Mar 25th (Wednesday) 5:30 pm
LWVCNM Book Club
LWVCNM Office Conference Room
See info p. 7

Mar 28th (Saturday) 10 am – Noon
Drop in Coffee

April 1st (Wednesday) 5:30 pm
LWVCNM Board Meeting,
ZOOM until further notice.
All members welcome.

April 9th (Thursday) 12 Noon
LWVCNM Monthly Educational Meeting
Topic: Data Centers and Microgrids in NM

May 9th (Saturday) Registration 9:30 am
Annual Meeting

OBSERVER REPORTS



Observer Corps Report – City of Rio Rancho Planning and Zoning Board

February 10, 2026

Valari Taylor, Observer via Zoom

Commissioner Robert Gabaldon, Commissioner Andrea Hankins, Commissioner Sal Tortorici and Commissioner Kevin Kofchur

Description of Issues Relevant to the League

Zone Map Amendment. M-1: Industrial & Business Park District & R-1: Single-Family Residential District to R-4: Single-Family Residential District; and Rio Rancho Estates Unit 8, Block 62, Lots 8-10, & 15-17; and Block 66, Lots 8-10, & 13-16 from R-1: Single-Family Residential District to **R-3: Mixed Residential District**

Zone Map Amendment.

The Applicant, the City of Rio Rancho, requests approval of a Zone Map Amendment establishing a Corridor Overlay Zone for enhanced setbacks to allow for protection of future right-of-way and access management along properties directly abutting Rainbow Boulevard within City limits. The Corridor Overlay Zone shall establish enhanced setbacks of 28'-56' for proposed future right-of-way along all subject properties. Staff contact is Tim Dvorak, and staff recommends the Planning and Zoning Board recommend approval of the Zone Map Amendment to the Governing Body. Rainbow Blvd Location Map Reproduction of Notices, Legal Ad Exhibits A-T (Rainbow Overlay) Exhibit U - Arterial Cross Sections (4-Lane & 6-Lane).

Land rights in relationship to Project Ranger.

Several citizens spoke against this project, stating they have not been involved in any discussions, and they would lose their land without compensation due to eminent domain. They also objected to only recently receiving a notice about this. The citizens were told this project is many years out, possibly 10-20 years. This planning is done well in advance because as the area is developed land overlays are investigated prior to any future development as part of the city's long range plans.

Streamed live on the City of Rio Rancho website at <https://rrnm.gov/2303/Watch-and-Download-City-Meetings>.

Sandoval County Commission Website <https://www.sandovalcountynm.gov/commission/>



Observer Corps Report – Bernalillo County Commission

February 2026

Karen Wentworth

Bernalillo County Commission Sets Conditions for Data Centers Seeking Tax Breaks

Barbara Baca, District 1; Frank Baca, District 2; Adriann Barboa, District 3; Walt Benson, District 4; Eric Olivas, District 5.

All commissioners were present for both meetings covered.

The Bernalillo County Commission passed an administrative resolution at the February 10 meeting saying as a policy the commission will not consider tax breaks such as Industrial Revenue Bonds for new data centers unless they met rigid criteria. Any data center seeking a tax break would have to reflect a strong public benefit by:

- Entering into a project labor agreement for construction workforce hiring
- Ensuring that construction hiring incorporates a registered apprenticeship program
- Prioritizing in-state permanent workforce hiring
- Ensuring permanent positions meet or exceed 120% of area median salary
- Ensuring that electricity is supplied by a private microgrid or via connection to a public grid regulated by the Energy Transition Act to guarantee that energy does not include any fuel source derived from carbon-based sources
- Ensuring that water needs of the project will be fully offset by conservation or n-stream flow improvements funded by the developer
- Creating a water reclamation and water reuse plan

The administrative resolution was triggered by concerns over Project Jupiter, a large data center project in Dona Ana County that received a major tax break from the county commission without conditions. When the public realized the developer intended to use gas-fired turbines to power a microgrid for the center, and that projected air emissions would exceed the combined air emissions of the cities of Albuquerque and Las Cruces, alarm bells went off. The project is now facing a lawsuit, and it's not clear whether it will proceed.

This resolution only covers projects seeking tax breaks. It would not affect projects funded completely by the developer.

Microgrids for large projects are a new development in New Mexico. Most electrical energy projects that affect the state electrical grid are tightly regulated by the Public Regulation Commission. But microgrids to power large projects may not fall under current state law.

The U.S. League of Women Voters has general positions on this issue that say the League supports projects that have a “predominant reliance on renewable resources,” and “policies to reduce energy demand and minimize the need for new generating capacity,” but they are not specific to the use of microgrids. This may be a promising area of study for the League in the future.

(cont.)

Commissioners also approved salary increase for county officials who run for county office in the future.

- Assessor – \$131,506, beginning with the 2027 term.
- Clerk – \$132,504, beginning with the 2029 term.
- Commissioners – \$ 69,703, District 1,7 beginning with the 2027 term.
- Commissioners – \$ 69,703, District 2,3,4 beginning with the 2029 term
- Probate Judge – \$ 46,940 beginning with the 2027 term
- Treasurer – \$127,523 beginning with 2029 term

The League has no guidance on the issue of local government official pay. What is especially confusing on the issue of county commissioners is that the position has traditionally been considered to be part time, and the pay scale reflected that view. The most recent action of the commission boosted commission pay by 55%, but it is not clear whether this is still considered to be a part time position.



Sandoval County Commission regular meeting
January 28, 2026
Mary Templeton, observer (by video recording)

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

Description of Issues Relevant to the League

No topics for which the League has an advocacy position were taken up during this meeting.

Additional Comments

Sandoval County Commission Website

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



Middle Rio Grande Housing Collaborative (MRGHC) - Affordable Housing Report

January 22, 2026

Janie McGuigan

The MRGHC met at 1:00 pm, Thursday, January 22, 2026 for a regular meeting at the MRCOG Board Room. Four of five MRGHC Commissioners attended: Dan Majewski, Ian Robertson, Lawrence Rael, and Steve Anaya. Other attendees were: Cindy Chavez, Bernalillo County Manager; Barbara Baca, County Commissioner, Carla Martinez, CFO, City of Albuquerque and Ellen Braden, City of Albuquerque.

MRGHC personnel and staff updates include: Yasmine Armstrong, MRGHC Executive Director, resigned in December. Additionally, Talia Friedman, Chair, resigned from the MRGHC. The nomination of a replacement Commissioner by the City of Albuquerque is pending.

At the January meeting, the MRGHC Commissioners selected a new Interim Chair, Lawrence Rael, and approved as written the November 20 Meeting Minutes. Updates were provided by County and City staff regarding the expenditure and/or obligation of last year's MRGHC Legislative allocation of \$110,000,000.

The County Report was provided by Cindy Chavez who stated that 79% (\$48,475,289) of the County's portion (\$61,524,317) from the State had been invested (expended and/or obligated) as of January 2026 in: infrastructure supports for 1 new housing development (725 units); gap funding for 5 new housing construction projects (625 units); operating housing costs to accommodate 192 families and 380 individuals; and homeless prevention funds for housing rehabilitation and rapid rehousing vouchers.

The City housing expenditure update was provided by Carla Martinez, CFO, City of Albuquerque, who reported that: 37% (\$4.9M) of the City's allocation of (\$13,467,739) for Gateway Operations has been expended; and 13% has been utilized for capital expenditures of \$3,371,865 for the remodeling of Gateway West and Medical Respite facilities. The Gateway Operations funds cited above are supporting the Gateway Men's housing and treatment navigation center, the Women's housing and treatment navigation center, First Responder Receiving Area, and the Young Adult housing and treatment navigation center. These centers provide a total of 523 beds/night.

At the 2026 New Mexico Legislative Session, the MRGHC will pursue a combined request of \$181,246,917 [City (\$87,401,917) and County (\$93,845,000)]. This compares to the original 2025 legislative request of \$277M and receipt of \$110M. The 2026 funds will be used by the City and County for housing new construction gap financing, preservation and expansion of affordable housing, affordable housing vouchers and homeless prevention and rapid rehousing vouchers.

The next MRGHC meeting date is scheduled for Thursday, February 26, 2026 @ 1pm, virtually via Zoom only.



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 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.