

The Voter – October Observer Report

Bernalillo County Commission

Commission Hears Concerns from County Assessor

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

County commissioners heard concerns from the Bernalillo County Assessor at their September 9 meeting about a change initiated by the NM Taxation and Revenue Department. Normally, the state calculates the yield of the various mill levies the county collects as property taxes. The change shifts the responsibility of calculating the yield from the state to the local county assessors. Bernalillo County Assessor argues that is too much power to place in the hands of one elected official, since it basically gives the power to calculate property taxes and collect them in one office, without a check and balance. He asked the commission to consider supporting legislation to force the Taxation and Revenue Department to continue to make the calculations for the counties.

LWVUS Position: Citizen's right to Know/Public Participation. Protest the citizen's right to know and facilitate informed understanding and public participation in government decision making.

The commission took an unusual action at its August 11 meeting, with all commissioners in attendance. The Bernalillo County staff introduced a series of bond proposals last June that totaled 45-million dollars to be voted on in the November election.

At the August meeting the commission approved a series of motions that removed 10-million dollars from county reserves and placed it into road construction and community center projects. The bond proposals voters will see on November 2 will total 55-million dollars.

Bernalillo County has traditionally been conservative with its reserve money, but the August action took the reserves down to the absolute minimum required by the state, in spite of staff warnings that the county reserves were approaching the red line point at which the state takes over a county's finances. The vote was 4 to 1, with commissioner Walt Benson voting in the minority.

LWVNM Position: Open Meetings ...To the extent that is practical, have all written materials that will be used in a public meeting available a week in advance, preferably online, or let the public know where and how such materials can be obtained.

Karen Wentworth - Observer