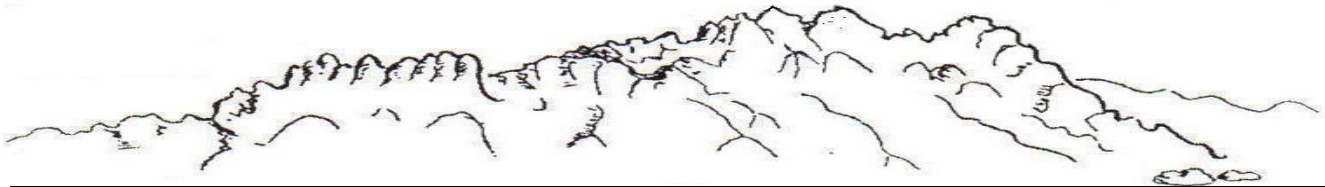


The VOTER

League of Women Voters
of Greater Las Cruces
(575) 524-VOTE (8683)
Web Site: www.lwvglc.org
October 2011



TWO IMPORTANT EVENTS IN OCTOBER

Lunch with a Leader

Monday, October 10, 2011, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Good Samaritan Social Center, Creative Arts Room,
3011 Buena Vida Circle

Regional Partnerships, Solutions & Services



Jay Armijo, Executive Director, South Central Council of Government (SCOG) of which Doña Ana County is a member, will introduce League members to the work of this organization. Serving the real world needs of residents, businesses and local governments is central to

the daily work of SCOG. To achieve its goal of promoting sustainable economic growth and local prosperity across New Mexico, SCOG believes that local governments, businesses and community leaders can accomplish more by working together than individually.

SCOG takes a long-term and holistic view of regional community and economic development opportunities and challenges. It recognizes the interdependence and cross-

(Continued on page 2)



LWVUS EDUCATION STUDY

Monday, October 24, 2011, 10-11:30 a.m.
Good Samaritan Social Center, Conference
Room, 3011 Buena Vida Circle

This is a **consensus unit meeting** that will focus on the League's national study, the Federal Role in Public Education. Consensus questions and synopsis papers related to this study are in the Special Issue that comes with *The VOTER*.

PLEASE BRING THIS ISSUE WITH YOU!



VOTER INFORMATION

Candidates' Forum

Las Cruces Municipal Election
(Municipal Judge, Mayor and
City Councilors for Districts 1, 2, 4)

Wednesday, October 5, 2011, 6-8 p.m.
Las Cruces City Hall, 700 N. Main

Televised on Comcast Ch. 20

Voters Guide

Available in *The Bulletin*
October 14 issue

Available online: www.lwvglc.org

Important Election Dates

- Oct 4 - Candidate certification
- Oct 11 - Voter registration ends
- Oct 12 - Early voting starts for paper ballots only
- Oct 19 - In person early voting starts at City Hall only
- Nov 5 - Early voting ends
- Nov 8 - **ELECTION DAY**

Information: Telephone City Clerk,
Esther Martinez, 541-2115

The VOTER

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The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces

P.O. Box 8322
Las Cruces, NM 88006-8322
(575) 524-VOTE (8683)
Web Site: www.lwvglc.org

President - Bonnie Burn

Vice President & Program
Paula Nielson

Secretary - Martha Duran

Treasurer - Ruth Benjamins

Director, Membership
Roberta Gran

Director, Voter Services
Erika Graf-Webster

Nominating Committee
Chair: Vicki Simons
Elected Member: Sadie Valverde

STUDY GROUPS

Affordable Housing
Vicki Simons - 522-4813
Christina Little - 373-1882

Education
Bonnie Burn - 526-0013

Mental Illness Services in Doña Ana County
Becky Beckett - 522-8171
Mickey Curtis - 532-5655

Metropolitan Court
Marjorie Burr - 522-2528

ACTION COMMITTEE
Vicki Simons - 522-4813

Web Master - Dale Yeo

Newsletter Editor
Bonnie Burn - 526-0013
burnb@comcast.net

Lunch with a Leader (Continued from page 1)

cutting relationships between economic development, environmental stewardship, infrastructure upgrades, intermodal transportation systems, affordable and quality housing, a skilled and reliable workforce, and many other factors essential to NM state economic competitiveness and strong quality of life.

Jay Armijo was raised in Sierra County and brings a home-town perspective and passion to his position as executive director for SCOG. Having worked for several state agencies, two councils of government, and as a county commissioner, Jay has worked directly with all thirty-three New Mexico counties helping to provide services to veterans, senior citizens, small businesses, and communities that lack adequate infrastructure.

CALENDAR

October 3 (Monday) - Deadline for Lunch with a Leader. RSVP Paula Nielson, Email: paulanielson@comcast.net, Tel: 386-7957.

October 5 (Wednesday) - 10-11:30 a.m., Board Meeting, Branigan Library, Board Room

October 5 (Wednesday) - 6-8 p.m., Candidates' Forum, City of Las Cruces Municipal Election, City Hall Council Chambers, 700 N. Main. (Televised on Ch. 20)

October 18 Candidates' Forum cancelled!



October 10 (Monday) - 11:30 a.m - 1 p.m., Lunch with a Leader, Topic: Regional Partnerships, Solutions and Services, Speaker: Jay Armijo, Executive Director, South Central Council of Government, Good Samaritan Social Center, Creative Arts Room, 3011 Buena Vida Circle. Lunch is \$10.

October 24 (Monday) - 10-11:30 a.m., Unit Meeting: LWVUS Education Study about the Role of Federal Government in Education, Good Samaritan Social Center, Conference Room, 2011 Buena Vida Circle. (Please read Special Issue mailed with this issue of *The VOTER*.)

October 14 (Friday) - Voters Guide, The Bulletin.

Notable Events: October is United Nations month
October 24 - United Nations - 66th Anniversary
October 31 - Halloween



President's Message

Voter suppression is a current topic of conversation as we learn about states that are proposing or enacting legislation that requires voter photo IDs, shorter periods for early voting, new voter registration requirements that could mean fines if violated, and increased difficulty to update voter registration. Passage of the National Voting Rights Act of 1965 removed barriers to voting.



The League of Women Voters is taking action in many states. League members are protective of the right to vote. They remember the 72 year struggle that culminated in ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. LWV Florida for a second time is taking the Florida State Legislature to the U.S. District Court in opposition to Florida House Bill 1355, now called the Voter Suppression Act. The court is being asked to review four provisions of this bill: (1) limiting access to early voting by decreasing the number of early voting days from two weeks to eight days; (2) strict new rules about "third party" voter registration groups, including fines (up to \$1,000 if completed applications are not turned in within 48 hours) and new registration requirements; (3) restricting access to amending the Constitution by cutting the time by 50% that a citizen's signature is considered valid on an initiative petition; and (4) requirements about updating voter registration information on election day. While the case winds through the court, Florida Leagues have suspended voter registration, an activity that has been a mainstay among the civic services provided to the community.

Voter suppression is a strategy to influence the outcome of an election by discouraging or preventing people from exercising their right to vote. Presented as an effort to reduce voter fraud, such policy impacts students, seniors, and minorities. To ensure that suppression is not successful, each of us **must exercise our right to vote.**

Bonnie Burn

Board Highlights

September 7, 2011, 10-11:30 a.m., Branigan Library, Board Room

- Ruth Benjamins was appointed Treasurer for the remainder of the League's fiscal year.
- Education Study consensus questions were approved.
- Voter Services: Candidates' questions for *Voters Guide* were approved, and the remainder of voter services activities for the 2011 Las Cruces municipal election were reviewed.
- Affordable Housing: Schedule for education of members about the study was reviewed and noted for the master calendar. A panel discussion will make presentations at the November 14 Lunch with a Leader and unit meetings will be held on January 23 and 30.

Welcome!

NEW MEMBERS

Melanie Mitchard

6748 Via Campestre

Las Cruces, 88007

Tel: 525-6725

E-mail: mmwmitchard@gmail.com

Microsoft Software

The League is licensed for three users of MS Word Software

If you wish to use it for League work, please contact Erika Graf-Webster 521-066 or egratwebster@q.com

Friends of the League

John Ameriks, M.D.

Biad Chile Ltd. Co.

Joseph P. Camunez, DDS
Citizens Bank

Dental Associates, PA

Doggie Dude Ranch and
Cat Farm

Donald and Winifred Dresp

Adrian and Jackie Edwards

Nancy & Ken Hall

First New Mexico Bank

Edward Jones - Connie Lee

Patricia Kratz

Lilley Law Offices

Louise P. Lockhart

Barbara Myers

Francisco Mario Ortiz Law Firm

Judith Scott and Paul Thomas

Wanda Skowlund

LaJune Smith

Marie Sutter-Sinden

Tom Tate

Zia Engineering & Environmental
Consultants

Thank You

Election Day Vote Centers - *Lynn J. Ellins, Doña Ana County Clerk*

At the urging of the state's 33 county clerks, Senate Bill 337 was unanimously passed during the 2011 legislative session, and signed into law. The bill provides county clerks the option of utilizing *election day Vote Centers* in future elections instead of precinct polling places, as has been the case to date. The Doña Ana County Clerk's office is considering introducing this format in the upcoming 2012 primary and general elections, with 37 locations throughout the county replacing the 82 precinct-assigned locations that would otherwise be required.

A **Vote Center** is a location serving as a polling place at which any registered voter may vote regardless of the precinct in which the voter is registered. As is now the case at existing early voting locations, ballots will be printed that coincide with the precinct in which the voter is registered, containing only the names of candidates for whom the voter is entitled to vote.

And as is now the case at existing early voting locations, each election day Vote Center will have a computer with a secure electronic online connection to access the state-wide voter registration data base maintained at the County Clerk's Office. In addition, each election day Vote Center will have immediate access to all voting information recorded in computers at all other election day Vote Centers in the county. When a voter casts his or her vote at any Vote Center, it is immediately recorded in the County Clerk's Office and at all other Vote Centers, thus preventing any voter from attempting to vote more than once.

Several other advantages of Vote Centers.

Provisional ballots will become almost unnecessary. Provisional ballots have always been problematic regarding candidates running in districts because a voter voting provisionally in the wrong district will not have that vote counted for those candidates. On the other hand, provisional ballot votes for county, congressional and state-wide candidates are always counted. By eliminating the need for provisional ballots, voters will never have any of their votes ruled out because they will only vote for candidates appearing on the ballot that actually represent them. Now, every vote they cast will be counted.

Under the current election day precinct polling place system, each voter must vote at the polling place assigned to the precinct in which the voter is registered. Failing to do this, the voter must vote on a provisional ballot, as discussed above. Under a Vote Center system, voters do not have the burden of finding their assigned polling place at any one of 82 locations serving 120 precincts; instead the voter has a menu of 37 available locations across the county, some close to home, others close to school or work. There is no "wrong" location at which to vote.

Election-day Vote Centers also reduce the scale and complexity of administering election day to more manageable levels. With only 37 teams of Vote Center poll workers to assign instead of 120 precinct teams, the county's Bureau of Elections can take greater care in selection of fewer proven poll workers from a larger pool of applicants, ensuring that Vote Centers are fully staffed with the very best poll workers available. Likewise, delivery of voting machines and other supplies to Vote Centers will be accomplished in about half the time than was formerly required.

The majority of proposed sites are at public school facilities that have inherent qualities that make them good locations for Vote Centers: large areas such as gymnasiums and cafeterias capable of handling large numbers of voters. The schools are evenly distributed throughout the county, are generally known by the public, and easily accessible along most automobile and public transit system roadways.

Finally, cost.

The Clerk's Office ran an estimate of how much less it would cost the county ("taxpayers") if Vote Centers were employed. Several models were used, but the most reasonable was a 37-Vote Center model that most efficiently served the county's municipalities and rural areas. A 37-Vote Center comparison was made to the cost of running election precincts for all 120 precincts.

(Continued on page 6)

Report from Affordable Housing Committee, September 2011

Vicki Simons & Christina Little, Co-Chairs

The final report from the Affordable Housing Committee will be comprised of two parts: an interview with Erin Quinn of the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority, appears in this issue; a discussion of the affordable housing programs use of tax credits will appear in the November issue.

New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority

The LWV Affordable Housing Committee completed its research interviews with Erin Quinn, Senior Policy and Program Advisor for the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority (MFA).

MFA was created in 1975 by the NM Legislature to provide financing for housing and other related services to low- to moderate-income New Mexicans. As the state's official housing agency, MFA administers more than 35 programs that finance housing for the homeless, develop new affordable housing, and help families become first-time homeowners. MFA partners with lenders, realtors, non-profits, local governments and developers throughout the state to make its programs available to all eligible New Mexicans. MFA is a quasi-public entity, not a state agency. Specifically, while MFA is able to issue revenue bonds, these are not obligations of the State of New Mexico.

Funds are generated through the sale of tax-exempt mortgage revenue bonds that MFA is authorized by the State to issue. IRS regulations govern these bonds. Each year the IRS determines the federal private activity bond cap for each of the states. For New Mexico in 2011 this was approximately \$279 million. The NM Board of Finance decides how the yearly funds are allocated. Tax-exempt private activity bonds can only be issued for specific purposes: the development of affordable multifamily rental housing; single-family mortgage revenue bonds (i.e., below-market rate mortgage loans for first-time home buyers); student loans; and economic development. All state and federal housing programs are now administered by the MFA, including Section 8 housing funds and other HUD projects. To date, the MFA has provided more than \$4.1 billion in affordable housing for New Mexico's families.

MFA is dependent on the bond capacity issued by the NM Board of Finance. MFA earns a spread (regulated by the IRS) on the bonds. This spread is used to finance the operations of MFA. The other portion of the operating budget comes from fees for the administration of various kinds of federal housing programs. As an example, MFA administers the HOME Investment Partnerships Program for all areas of the state except Albuquerque and Las Cruces (which receive funds directly from the federal government).

The New Mexico MFA is completely self-sufficient and receives no operational money from the state. The agency is led by seven board members and chaired by the lieutenant governor. Four of the board members are from the private sector and are appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the state senate. Three are ex-officio voting members who serve by virtue of their state offices, including the attorney general and the state treasurer. Rules and regulations governing the MFA must be approved by an oversight committee from the New Mexico legislature. The committee is comprised of members from the House of Representatives and the Senate.

MFA administers 37 state and federal programs that include low-interest mortgage loans and down payment assistance, weatherization, green building and rehabilitation, and tax credit programs. In calendar year 2010, the MFA provided more than \$300 million in low-interest financing, grants and nonfinancial support for affordable housing and related services including:

- \$152 million for 1,200 first-time home buyer loans and down payment assistance.
- \$19.7 million for housing rehabilitation and weatherization for 4,000 homeowners.
- \$95 million for the development of 1,235 rental and homeownership units.
- \$23.6 million in rental assistance payments for 5,318 apartments occupied by low-income families.
- \$5.1 million for 13,900 homeless and "precariously housed" individuals.

(Continued on page 6)

Affordable Housing *(Continued from page 5)*

MFA has provided funding for various affordable housing activities in every county in New Mexico.

MFA is administering more than \$92 million in federal stimulus money. Funds are being used to restart 23 stalled affordable housing developments, to weatherize thousands of homes across the state and to help prevent homelessness. In addition, MFA is administering \$11.2 million for the Neighborhood Stabilization Program which is part of the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008. Forty-five foreclosed and abandoned homes have been purchased and rehabilitated through the program. Thirty-five of those homes have been sold to families whose income is at or below 120% of median.

Erin made the point that housing is NOT a government works project. Instead it is market driven. In this way, it is very different from transportation, education, etc. Even when the government is involved, housing is necessarily driven by market forces. There must be demand and local capacity in order to make projects happen.

Vote Center *(Continued from page 4)*

The results:

- \$216,000 - Poll worker cost to the county to operate 120 primary and general election day precincts.
- \$79,550 - Poll worker cost to the county to operate 37 primary and general election day Vote Centers.
- \$136,450 - Savings every primary and general election day.

What are the disadvantages?

Obviously, the primary disadvantage is that some voters may travel a little farther on election day to cast their vote. On the other hand, many voters may find it easier and more convenient to vote at Vote Centers closer to their places of work and may not be concerned about getting to the polls at 7:00 a.m. or after work before the polls close at 7:00 p.m. For those for whom travel does present a problem, absentee voting by mail will remain available.

Coupled with a county-wise advertising campaign, the County Clerk's Office plans to hold public meetings around the county to get public comments about the proposal.

County Clerks Consider Voter Verification

Reported by Bonnie Burn

At its meeting on Saturday, September 17, Daniel Ivey-Soto, Executive Director, New Mexico Clerks, shared a PowerPoint presentation about enhanced voter verification with LWVNM Board members. For the moment it appears that the issue of voter photo ID is not going to go away. In anticipation of the 2012 NM Legislative Session, county clerks throughout the state met and discussed issues and principles that may be developed into proposed legislation.

The requirements to be a voter are (1) citizenship, (2) residency, and (3) age. No data exist that prove citizenship or residency. No IDs exist that prove citizenship and residency. Despite rampant rumors and stories, there have been no documented cases of in-person voter identification fraud in New Mexico; however, there is a perception of its existence. County clerks have handled numerous cases of attempted and actual absentee-by-mail voter impersonation and voter registration fraud. County Clerks have generally not been able to secure the assistance of District Attorneys in prosecuting these cases. Bottom line, no link has been established between voter registration fraud and voting fraud.

It does make sense to propose enhanced voter verification. In considering ways to do this, the clerks came up with six principles.

(Continued on page 7)



www.lwvglc.org
Voters Guide
2011 Las Cruces City Election

LEAGUE OBSERVER REPORTS

The League's Observer Corps can enable greater coverage and information gathering, provide early warning of upcoming issues of concern, increase League's visibility, and assist in networking with other groups. We appreciate the reports that are submitted by Observers. Following the League practice of publishing nonpartisan, objective reports, the information submitted may be edited for content and brevity.

South Central Solid Waste Authority (SCSWA), September 15, 2011, 9 a.m., Conference Room, Transfer Station. –

Johnnie Aldrich, Observer

The Solid Waste Authority, a joint city/county board of directors, was formed to coordinate solid waste management, the removal and disposal of the thousands of tons of trash/garbage generated by the residents of Las Cruces and Doña Ana County. Director Patrick Peck supervises operations and reports to the SCSWA Board at these monthly meetings.

Over the past summer a Task Force composed of representatives from the Board met to address the problem of illegal dumping in our county. Since many of the items that appear overnight in desert locations come out of El Paso and its environs, the Task Force included representatives from our neighboring communities in Texas.

Because of the usually ineffective detection and enforcement techniques now employed in Doña Ana County, this task force will sponsor a Summit on Illegal Dumping to be held at the Sunland Park Casino facility from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 26. Representatives from surrounding southern New Mexico and Texas counties will be invited to attend. Those opinion leaders who attend will hear summit presenters from SCSWA and Santa Fe (this is a state-wide problem) describe the extent of the problem. Representatives from El Paso and Tucson, AZ will suggest possible solutions. Both of these areas have enforcement policies in place, but they are very different and will be considered as alternative possibilities for our area.

In other business, the Board:

- Heard comments about the work in progress that is the SCSWA Business and Master Plan;
- Passed a resolution to approve a memorandum of understanding by and between the SCSWA and the City of Anthony NM; and

- Passed a resolution that approved a fiscal year 2011-2012 budget adjustment for increased chipping of the large quantities of green waste at the Community Collection Centers due to the freeze of February 2011 that damaged trees and plants.

For details about any of the items in this summary, please call SCSWA at 575-528-3800 where friendly, knowledgeable folks can answer your questions.

Voter Verification *(Continued from page 6)*

Voter verification must:

1. Include by-mail voters in addition to in-person voters.
2. Be geared to verify voters' citizenship, residency, and age, not to create additional requirements.
3. Include a "fallback" designed to relieve voter from appearance at Clerk's Office.
4. Include enforcement and prosecution as essential elements.
5. Should use technology and common sense.
6. Must remember what can and cannot be proved.

Three parts are suggested for a legislative proposal: (1) enforcement, (2) in-person voting, and (3) by mail voting. The remainder of the presentation focused on possible components for each of these parts. The next step for this project is to write legislation. As this happens, we will keep you advised.

Candidates' Forum

Las Cruces Municipal Election

(Municipal Judge, Mayor and
City Councilors for Districts 1, 2, 4)

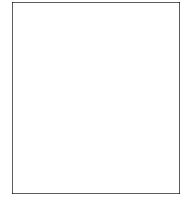
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FIRST CLASS



**Las Cruces
 Municipal Election
 Candidates Forum - Oct. 5
 Voters Guide - Oct. 14
 Details Inside**

**OCTOBER 2011
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Membership Application

Membership: Individual (\$60), 2nd Household Member (\$30), and Students (\$25)

Name: _____ **2nd Household:** _____

Address: _____ **City/State/Zip:** _____

Phone: _____ **Cell:** _____ **Email:** _____

\$ _____ Contribution to the League Make Check payable to LWV of Greater Las Cruces

\$ _____ Contribution to the Education Fund (Tax Deductible) Make check payable to
 League of Women Voters Education Fund

All checks should be mailed to

League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces, P.O. Box 8322, Las Cruces, NM 88006-8322

The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.