

The VOTER

League of Women Voters
of Greater Las Cruces
(575) 524-VOTE (8683)
[http://lwvlascruces.
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June 2009



Lunch Meeting - June 8, 2009 , 11:30 a.m.
Building Trust - A Coalition That Works
Lora Lucero, AICP, Natural Resources Director, LWVNM

During the 2009 New Mexico Legislative Session, a diverse group of organizations came together to educate and advocate for change to the current state Tax Increment Development District (TIDD) Act. They worked effectively together, and separately, to defeat the SunCal TIDD bill. Lessons learned from the success may prove useful for future coalition-building on a variety of issues.

The defeat of SunCal's \$408 million TIDD on a breathtaking 33-33 vote in the final hours of the legislative session surprised everyone, most of all SunCal's eleven lobbyists. They had worked the halls of the State Capitol for two months, and spent nearly a quarter of a million dollars on an advertising campaign to convince the public and decision makers that SunCal's TIDDs were the best thing since sliced bread. But they underestimated the power of a coalition.

The LWVNM joined educators, union workers, advocates for children, conservationists and many others to defeat SunCal's TIDDs and urge statutory reform. This saga will certainly continue either in a special legislative session or in the next regular session in January 2010. Learn how this coalition worked and what changes might be in the works for the future.

Lora Lucero is the Natural Resources Director for the LWVNM, the editor of *Planning and Environmental Law*, a monthly Journal of the American Planning Association, and has worked for nearly 30 years as a city planner and land use attorney. She is a mother of three grown sons, a grandmother, a community gardener, and avid traveler. Her next adventure is the Trans-Siberian Railroad in October.

CALENDAR

June 1 (Monday) - **Deadline for Reservations for Lunch with a Leader.** RSVP Sharon Burbano (526-2860) It is **important** that everyone **make a reservation.**

June 1 (Monday) - Continuing the Dialogue, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., Good Samaritan Village, Small Conference Room, 1st Floor, 3011 Buena Vida Circle.

June 1 (Monday) - **Board Meeting**, 5:00 p.m., Branigan Library Board Room. Members are welcome.

June 8 (Monday) - 11:30 a.m., **Lunch General Meeting** at Good Samaritan Village's Social Center, Creative Arts Room, 3011 Buena Vida Circle. **Topic:** *Building Trust: The TIDD Coalition That Succeeds* Speaker is Lora Lucero, director of Natural Resources, LWVNM. Lunch is \$8.

Mark Your Calendar

June 13 - LWVUS Virtual Council, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., LWV of Central New Mexico, Albuquerque

Notable Events

June 14 - Flag Day

June 21 - Father's Day.

VOTER DEADLINE

June 15 — Noon

Email copy to Bonnie Burn (burnb@comcast.net)

Tel: 526-0013

The VOTER

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The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces

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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.

President's Message

The anticipated biennial State Convention was held on May 16-17, in Albuquerque. The Central New Mexico League welcomed over 40 delegates and observers. A warm reception was hosted by Don and Dianne Goldfarb on



Back Row (L-R) Bonnie Burn, Ellen Haltom, Johnnie Aldrich
Front Row (L-R) Becky Beckett, Christina Little, Marnie Leverett, and Marjorie Burr

May 15th, preceding the start of the Convention. We had an opportunity to meet and talk with each other informally.

Saturday, it was down to business. President Kathy Campbell welcomed 31 delegates. Convention rules and the order of business were adopted. Delegates listened to the final report of the Treasurer and received the report of the committees: Bylaws, Budget and Nominating. During announcements, Carolie Mullan, LWVUS Liaison for LWVNM, presented President Campbell with a certificate of achievement from LWVUS that Kathy accepted on behalf of all of the board members. We finished well before lunch, and the nominated candidates for officer and director portfolios had an opportunity to introduce themselves.

Jody Larson, former president of the Santa Fe County League, made a presentation about the government transparency project just completed by the League and other local coalitions concerning Santa Fe County Government.

In the afternoon session two very interesting workshops were presented: (1) Carolie Mullan on League Leadership, and (2) Ruth Hoffman, of Lutheran Evangelical Services, who spoke about the “ins” and “outs” of the state budget.

The banquet food was delicious and the speaker, Doug Fernandez, KOA TV, ABC-7, Albuquerque, news commentator who covers politics, enlightened us about not only political news but also how media executives reach decisions about presenting the news.

Sunday was a half-day session. A two-year budget was adopted, as were the current State League positions. The recommendation of continuing the state water study for another year was approved, and the non-recommended item of expanded language in the Education position also was approved. After much discussion two proposed resolutions: (1) asking LWVUS to support its current position that favors financing through general tax funds (single-payer), and (2) giving authority to the Bylaws Committee to bring corrections and consistency to bylaws language were approved. Directions to the Board completed the agenda. To learn all of the details, please watch *La Palabra*, Summer 2009 issue.

Bonnie Burn

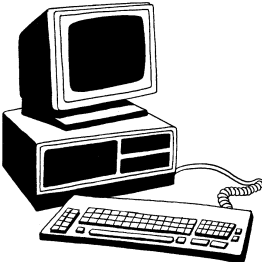
**LOOK BACK
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)**

Tom Murphy, MPO Officer, and Caeri Thomas, Associate Planner, made a presentation to members at the May 11 Lunch with a Leader meeting. The focuses first on the Metropolitan Planning Organization: (1) it is a multi-jurisdictional agency that serves Las Cruces, parts of Doña Ana County, and Mesilla; (2) it operates under the guidance of the Policy Committee comprised of nine elected officials from these three jurisdictions, who are responsible for planning all aspects of the transportation system in the region; and (3) the activities include thoroughfares, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, public transit, rail, and the airport.

The major work product of the organization is the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), a 20-year plan that is reviewed and revised every 5-years. The current revision, Transport 2040, covers the above named activities and, additionally, a plan for a regional transit system. Project priorities in cooperation with the NM Department of Transportation are established when programming federal and state transportation funds.

The PowerPoint presentation included some interesting maps showing aerial views of Las Cruces from about 1955 to 2006. The area has changed a lot in 50 years. Solano and Valley Drives have been supplemented with I-10, I-25 and I-70, and growth has pushed the city toward the Organ Mountains, as the League's land use position proposes.

Before the meeting concluded, members completed an input sheet that captured League member's recommendations. Among them were an eastern bypass loop relieving the congestion on I-25, a light rail along the I-25 corridor, expansion of hiking/biking designated trails, more east/west roads across Las Cruces and a bus connect from the north side of town to NMSU. Connectivity suggestions for the East Mesa, and a rail connection between Las Cruces and El Paso were recommended. We await the final report.



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New Members

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DUES ARE DUE
(June 30 - end of the grace period.)

It's that time of year again - time to renew membership dues



- \$50 - Individual
- \$50 - 1st Household Member
- \$25 - 2nd Household Member

Make checks payable to
LWV of Greater Las Cruces
and send to
League of Women Voters
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P.O. Box 8322
Las Cruces, NM 88006-8322

Many members choose to make an additional donation at the same time dues are paid. We would appreciate any amount you can contribute. To make a tax deductible contribution, please make your check payable to the League of Women Voters Education Fund.

Membership Directory (2009-2010) will be produced during July. Please send any changes in your information to Pat Pederson, 522-3859 or patped6@yahoo.com.

Local League News Briefs

Board Planning Meeting - May 7, 2009

Members of the newly elected board met to develop plans for general meetings and to become oriented about duties and responsibilities.

The Board orientation consisted of a review of *League Basics*, the organizational bible of the LWVUS followed by local Leagues. A review of the tools available to Board members: *Impact on Issues*, the LWVUS publication of national positions, LWVNM positions that will come up for adoption at State Convention (May 16-17), job descriptions, and policies and procedures relevant to our local League.

Pat Pedersen, recently elected membership director, is the Board appointee to the Nominating Committee. Observer Corps volunteers are Pat Pedersen and Nancy Phillips for School Board meetings; Cathy Mathews for the Policy Committee of the Metropolitan Planning Organization; Cliff Pelton and Terri and Al McBrayer for SCRaP, a subcommittee of the South Central Solid Waste Authority that focuses on recycling. *Thank you* for volunteering.

The remainder of the meeting was focused on program planning for the period June-December, 2009. These topics were suggested: climate change, renewable energy, health care, tax increment development districts (TIDDs), ethics, and the Legislative Breakfast. Watch *The VOTER* for details as these issues are sorted by month into our Lunch with a Leader meetings.

The Board decided that the first Monday of the month will continue to be our meeting time. Branigan Library Board Conference room remains the location of choice, and 5 p.m. is an agreeable time for everyone. Remember that the Board meetings are open, and we invite you to attend. The next one is on Monday, June 1. The agenda will involve a continuation of the planning process for Lunch with a Leader meetings until the end of the League Year, April 2010.

The Behavioral Health Services Study Group is Active Again! - Becky Beckett and Mickey Curtis, Co-Chairs

The Behavioral Health Services Study Group (BHSS) will have a meeting on Thursday, May 28, 1:30 p.m. at FYI (Families and Youth, Inc.), Conference Room, 1320 S. Solano Drive. We will review our progress and set a timeline for next steps.

We invite anyone interested in joining this study group to come to the meeting. If you have any questions, call Mickey Curtis (522-4004) or email her at mc Curtis@fyinm.org or Becky Beckett at email rbeckett@zianet.com or call 644-3623.

Of additional interest is that on March 11, 2009, the National Association of Mental Illness (NAMI) released its report, *Grading of the States*. This report measures the progress of states in achieving the goals of a presidential commission that called for transformation of the mental health care system that too often is fragmented, outmoded, and inadequate. (See www.nami.org/grades2009).

There were six Bs, eighteen Cs, twenty-one Ds, six Fs, and no state received an A. New Mexico received a C. Categories were broken down into four areas, of which New Mexico received the following grades:

Grade C - Health Promotion & Measurement (Cat. I)
 Grade C - Financing & Core Treatment/Recovery Services (Cat. II)
 Grade F - Consumer & Family Empowerment (Cat. III)
 Grade D - Community Integration & Social Inclusion (Cat. IV)

The Albuquerque Journal quoted Becky Beckett as President of NAMI-NM: "It's disappointing that the state's grade has not changed [since the report three years ago]...We should be moving forward in helping people to get the help they need. Instead, we're stagnating. State budget cuts also threaten to push us backwards...Since the State of New Mexico 'talks the talk' of recovery and resiliency and has plans in place, it's score was not downgraded... Unfortunately, New Mexico is ranked 51st in per capita spending for behavioral health services, and this lack of funding inhibits the State's ability to progress."



League News



Health Care Update

The Health Care for All Campaign that works to achieve equitable, quality and affordable health care for all people living in New Mexico, has a new brochure. "Commonly Used Health Care Terms," a helpful tool in sorting out health care terminology.

LWVUS has activated a Task Force to educate League members about its position on health care. Four papers are now available on the web site for LWVUS: www.lwv.org. Please check them out because you will have new talking points when someone engages you about health care reform. Titles of the paper are:

- *A Short History of Major Changes in the U.S. Health Care System Since 1994: Costs, Coverage and Quality* by Doris Isolini Nelson.
- *From SCHIP TO CHIRPA* by Robin Lane.
- *At Risk American: The Uninsured and Underinsured* by Janis McMillen
- *Quick Facts on Health Care Costs* by the LWVUS Health Care Education Task Force, 2009.

President Obama seeks to have a Health Care Reform bill from the House of Representatives by July 31. Members of the health care industry seem to be on board with health reform and pledge to do their part to reduce the health care spending growth rate that is projected to save more than two trillion dollars over the next ten years. Critical debates in the Senate Finance Committee have been ongoing during the month of May. These hearings have been carried on TV channel, C-SPAN.

LWVUS is encouraging local League members to visit congressional leaders whenever they are at home. Vicki Simons and Bonnie Burn had two opportunities to express our concerns about health care issues with Representative Teague. On April 6th, we met with him in his office on W. Griggs Street, and on April 30th we met with Jake Redfearn, a staff member, who is involved

with the health care reform issue in the representative's office.

Some of you may have heard on the TV news that Senator Baucus (D-MT), chair, U.S. Senate Finance Committee, refused to have advocates for a single-payer system seated at the table of representatives who were interviewed during recent hearings on health care reform. From the audience, when requested to be seated, eight single-payer advocates were escorted from the hearing room and arrested. Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY) agreed to support a request to the Senate Finance Committee to have single-payers represented. Members of the LWVNM Action Committee requested that local members contact Senator Bingaman's office to support this request.

Climate Change Update: Representative Henry Waxman's proposed draft bill, The American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009, after review in the House, is going to be introduced as a mark-up bill. LWVUS has urged local League members to contact Representative Teague and request his support for the following:

- To enact a cap on greenhouse gas emissions for the year 2020 that is at least 25 percent below 1990 levels and for 2050 that is 80-95 percent below 1990 emissions.
- To assist developing countries to take action on climate change by providing funding to help them adapt.
- To enact policies to ensure that those who produce greenhouse gases will contribute to helping developing countries adapt.

Cap" is a legal limit on the quantity of greenhouse gases that a region can emit each year .

State Legislature Offers Renewable Energy Opportunity

Kathy Campbell, president, LWVNM, through the LWVNM Action Committee listserv, sent out a notification about new renewable energy options for homeowners and businesses.

During the 2009 Legislative Session three bills were passed and signed by Governor Richardson. SB 647, sponsored by Senator Peter Wirth (D-Santa Fe), allows cities and counties to take maximum advantage of the renewable energy incentives in President Obama's stimulus package. A local government creates a renewable energy finance district that has the authority to issue bonds to provide financing. For the next couple of years, this will allow districts to access the 0% interest green energy bonds in the federal stimulus plan. Next, homeowners and businesses that elect to participate can access funding from the newly created district to purchase their systems. They then repay the cost over time through a special assessment on their property which is added to their annual tax bill.

For the participant installing a new solar system, federal and state tax credits totaling 40% of the cost are available in the first year even if the participant fully finances the cost of the system. The PNM (Participant Net Metering) pays .087 cents per kilowatt hour electricity generated to El Paso Electric by the solar system through net metering and gives an additional .13 cents per kilowatt hour rebate.

The Doña Ana County Commission was addressed by Bill McCamley, former County Commissioner, at its meeting on Tuesday, May 12th, about this bill and the proposed creation of a Renewable Energy District.

In other legislation, HB 572 authorizes a solar energy improvement special assessment to encourage the development of solar energy improvements. HB 375 enacts new sections of the Income Tax, Corporate Income and Franchise taxes to provide for a tax credit for geothermal ground-coupled heat pumps.

Coline Jenkins, Great-Great-Granddaughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton – *Bonnie Burn*

In her president's letter, in the May 7 LWVUS Leader's Update, Mary Wilson wrote about visiting Buffalo, NY, and taking the opportunity to drive to Rochester, NY,

to tour the Susan B. Anthony House, and then to Seneca Falls, the home of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and the city where the First Women's Rights Convention took place in 1848. Coincidentally, the Spring 2009 issue of the National Parks magazine introduced the National Women's Rights History Project Act that is currently in Congress that would create a commemorative driving route across New York, linking the national park to properties like Susan B. Anthony's home, the Harriet Taubman house, and the courthouse where Anthony was tried and found guilty of voting. The article's author was Coline Jenkins, the great, great granddaughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Ms. Jenkins is a mother and a member of the Representative Town Meeting in Greenwich, Connecticut. Have you ever thought that a generational relative would be alive during our lifetime? Before planning your next trip, Google the National Park Service for a map of this historical route.

New Mexico State University Board of Regents Meeting - May 8, 2009

John Lazurak, Observer

The meeting included discussions about the search for the next NMSU President, and three members of the State Legislature, Mary Kay Papan, member Senate Finance Committee, John Arthur Smith, chair, Senate Finance Committee Chairman, and Tim Jennings, president pro tem of the Senate, who were present, expressed concern about the removal of Dr. Waded Cruzado as interim President. She will reassume her previous position as NMSU Executive Vice President and Provost and have the opportunity to apply for the permanent position of NMSU President if she chooses. State Representative Mary Helen Garcia had also expressed frustration with the participation of Hispanics, American Indians, and women on the search committee.

The members of the new search committee were announced in the week after the Board Meeting. You can find detailed information on the members of the committee, news releases, and the search consultant, as well as leave comments at www.nmsu.edu/presidentialsearch/index.html.

LEAGUE OBSERVER REPORTS

The League's Observer Corps enables greater coverage and information gathering, can provide early warning of upcoming issues of concern, can increase League's visibility, and can 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.

Las Cruces Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) – Policy Committee Meeting - May 13, 2009

Cathy Mathews, Observer

The meeting was called to order by chair Mayor Cadeña. Some members were not present and others wanted to leave early to attend a meeting with Governor Richardson. The members agreed to shorten the agenda and address only the consent agenda and the single Action Item, leaving the Discussion Items for the June meeting.

The single Action item called for a resolution adopting amendments to the MPO 2008–2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The only controversial amendment consisted of moving construction of two New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) projects to 2009.

The two NMDOT projects involve Interstate 10 between Las Cruces and the Texas state line—increasing, in each direction, the interstate by one lane and widening the shoulders. These projects had been slated for 2008 construction when the 2008–2013 TIP was first adopted. Then, early last year, the projects were postponed to 2012 due to lack of funding. The Governor, as recommended by NMDOT, submitted these projects for consideration for Federal Stimulus Package (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) funding. The funding is approved and NMDOT wishes to proceed.

Commissioner Karen Perez expressed concern that the Governor's and NMDOT's priorities were not reflective of the priorities expressed by the MPO, such as paving of Berino Road. She also questioned the need for construction of a third lane in the name of safety. Other members expressed concern that the construction of a third lane in each direction would consume the entire median and no space would remain for future construction of Rail Runner tracks in the median. Councillor Thomas noted that Burlington-Northern tracks exist over the route from Las Cruces to El Paso and most likely any commuter rail would run on them. The resolution passed with only Commissioner Perez voting no.

The South Central Recycling Partnership, (SCRaP) – May 14, 2009

Allen McBrayer, Observer

Patrick Peck, director of the South Central Solid Waste Authority, opened the meeting with a review of last month's Earth Day event at Young Park. The event was a great success. Attendance was ten times last year's due to increased promotion through advertising and support through the schools. It was suggested that the booth be put on a display tour to promote recycling between events. A schedule and locations will be established at a future date.

NASA brought information on "UNICOR", a national organization that recycles electronics. The company works with the prison system and trains workers to properly recycle computers, cell phones, fax machines, etc. (They take everything with a plug.) They might be able to assist with a Las Cruces electronics recycling event on "America Recycles Day", November 15.

There was a question about expanding the scope of current recycling information to include a ban on plastic bags and styrofoam. Another suggestion was presented regarding "Neighborhood Recycling Challenges". This future event could start in one neighborhood and move on to others to see if more can be gathered.

English Bird, executive director, NM Recycling Coalition, gave an update on legislative projects and a recycle conference coming up in September. With the support of the City Council and the County Commissioners, as well as some hard work performed at the state level, additional grant money has been approved for illegal dumpsite cleanup and recycling promotion.

The State of New Mexico is pushing for a 33% diversion of solid waste from landfills by 2012. The national recycling rate is 32.5%, (EPA, 2006). Here in New Mexico we are at 11% as of 2007, (NMED, 2008). Las Cruces and New Mexico are moving forward and things are starting to happen.



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**Membership
Renewals Due**

June 2009

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