

The VOTER

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



Algae Bio Fuel: Where we are headed and why? Bryn Davis, New Mexico Operations Manager, Sapphire Energy

As the U.S. seeks to become less dependent on imported oil, alternative fuels are part of the discussion. We've heard about Willie Nelson's vegetable oil replacing some of the diesel used in long-haul trucks, and natural gas is used in local government vehicles. BUT, are there others? We were fortunate to learn that an alternative fuel is being developed in our own back yard.

Sapphire Energy, a California-based company, is developing such a new technology. Bryn Davis, New Mexico operations manager, is our guest speaker and will present information about the issues of energy use in the U.S. and the world, particularly liquid transportation fuels. Against that background, he will look at:

- the future of traditional oil-based fuels and the alternatives along with the logic of Sapphire's focus on developing a transportation fuel based on algae
- the politics, energy use, economics, and science issues that are the driving reasons behind such efforts
- the future for Sapphire and other bio fuel companies

A graduate of Penn State University, Bryn began his career as a systems field engineer in support of technology development at White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) and several national laboratories. Facilities design integration and construction, weapon systems development and deployment, and avionics systems installation and testing are among the employment experiences that eventually brought him to our area of New Mexico. In his current role, Bryn is responsible for building and development of Sapphire Energy's research and development facilities located on 22 acres of land in the West Mesa Industrial Park, Las Cruces. Involved with this project is integrating the large scale production technologies for Sapphire's algae-based bio fuels program. **Come join us for lunch and learn about this new process.**

CALENDAR

September 1 (Tuesday) - **Deadline for Reservations for Lunch with a Leader.** RSVP Sharon Burbano (526-2860) **Reservations are required.**

September 7 (Monday) - **Labor Day**

September 8 (Tuesday) - 5:00 p.m. **Board Meeting**, Branigan Library Board Room.

September 14 (Monday) - 11:30 a.m., **Lunch General Meeting** at Good Samaritan Village, Social Center, Creative Arts Room, 3011 Buena Vida Circle. **Topic: Algae Bio Fuel: Where We Are Headed and Why,** presented by Bryn Davis, New Mexico Operations Manager, Sapphire Energy. Lunch is \$8. Reservation required.

Notable Dates:

September 17 - U.S. Constitution Adopted (1787)

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The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces

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Las Cruces, NM 88006-8322
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President—Bonnie Burn

Vice President & Voter Services

Vicki Simons

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Pat Pedersen

Director, Program

Sharon Burbano

Director, Public Relations

Marnie Leverett

Nominating Committee

Johnnie Aldrich, Chair
Marjorie Burr, Elected Member

STUDY GROUPS**Mental Illness Services in Doña Ana County**

Becky Beckett—522-8171
Mickey Curtis—532-5655

Election Procedures and Voter Turnout

Marnie Leverett—522-0347

Metropolitan Court

Marjorie Burr—522-2528

ACTION COMMITTEE

Vicki Simons—522-4813

Archivist—Barbara Myers

Historian—(Vacant)

Web Master—Jim Leverett

marniej@comcast.net

Newsletter Editor

Bonnie Burn—526-0013
burnb@comcast.net

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

I want to thank all of you who read and responded to our broadcast emails concerning health care reform and climate change legislation. The literature I've collected on health care reform is now two and one-half inches high, and the dialogue continues. The day-to-day changes in debate are often upsetting, and without a final bill it is hard to advocate effectively.



As we go to press, I am planning to attend the Climate Change Symposium sponsored by the League, Oxfam America and the Sierra Club, Rio Grande Chapter, August 21, Albuquerque. I will report on it in the next issue of *The VOTER*.

At the request of Sophia Peron and Kim Audette, citizen activists in Truth or Consequences, Marjorie Burr, Ellen Haltom, and I traveled there to engage in an informational meeting about potentially organizing a local League. The meeting was successful, and I forwarded a request to LWVNM to begin the process. This is an exciting adventure because it has been a while since a new local League was started in New Mexico.

This has been an active month for our local League committees. Three committees are active. Marnie Leverett reported on work done by the Branigan Library Study Group. The Solid Waste Recycling Study Group reconvened this month and is organizing to promote recycling locally. Mental Illness Services in Doña Ana County Study Group has completed its study and is ready to move to the next step in developing a position (see p. 4).

As you will notice in Board Highlights (p. 4), the Board is focusing its attention on fund raising. We are preparing for the 2010 election year that involves election of state representatives, magistrate judges, and county commissioners. If our expenses replicate those for the 2008 general election, we will need about \$5,000 (publication of a *Voters' Guide* and *Who's Who*) beyond our annual operating expenses. With economic times being what they are, we are getting started early. We appreciate those members who contributed when dues were renewed. If you haven't done so yet, please remember the League with a contribution. Remember that you can make a tax deductible donation to the LWV Ed Fund. If you have potential community donors in mind, please let me know.

The Little Red Hen Employment Office is sad to report that our Director of Voter Services position remains open. If someone is interested but untrained, the upcoming Las Cruces City Election (November 3, 2009) is a good opportunity to work with an experienced member, Vicki Simons, before making a commitment. Please volunteer.

Enjoy the rest of the summer, and remember the Lunch with a Leader general meeting (p. 1). Alternative fuels are certainly of interest now.

Bonnie Burn

Staff Updates at the County Clerk's Office

Lynn Ellins, County Clerk, Dona Ana County

This will bring you up-to-date on staff changes at the County Clerk's office.

As you probably know, the position of Elections Bureau Supervisor has been left open since I took office as your new County Clerk in January. Until now, I kept the position vacant for the remainder of the past fiscal year in order to cover overtime and temporary employee salary overruns incurred for the November 2008 General Election.

Well, I am now pleased to announce that as of August 3, the Bureau has a new Supervisor, Bob Bartelsmeyer. Bob has an extensive background in election matters. At the age of 21, he ran for and won the office of County Clerk in Lawrence County, Missouri, and served as such for 24 years until retiring from office.

After retiring, Bob went into private industry. He soon tired of it and returned to public service. Since then, he has worked in election bureaus in Nebraska, Arizona and Florida. Bob is a valuable and experienced addition to my office.

Mario Jimenez has been promoted to Chief Deputy Clerk. He and I will oversee elections while Bob breaks in—which should not take very long.

Finally, Lorrie Munoz, who is one of the longest tenured employees in the Bureau of Elections, has taken Mario's position. She is now the Elections Staff Coordinator, reporting directly to Bob.

I can be reached at 525-6156, Bob at 525-8158, Mario at 536-6155, and Lorie at 525-6154.



New Members

Miriam Ries
4152 Council Oak Rd.
Las Cruces, 88011
Tel: 522-3859
Email: mries415@yahoo.com

Membership Directory

Corrections for which we apologize:

Susan Schmugge's correct email is:
sschmugge@aol.com

Robbie Levey's correct street
address is 2282 Sunrise Point Rd.

So very sorry!

Membership Directories were mailed August 8, 2009

If you haven't received your copy, or
need to update information,
please contact Pat Pedersen
522-3859

LOOK BACK: It's In Our Hands - Presentation about the 2010 U.S. Census

"The first national census in the United States was conducted in 1790." So began the presentation by Elizabeth Furu Nocella, director, Field Operations, U.S. Census. In 1880, New Mexico and seven other territories were included in a census even though none were states, NM achieving statehood in 1912.

The primary use of decennial federal census data is in the allocation of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. Information also is used by Congress to adopt policy and formulate federal legislation. Locally, governments plan for community improvements (e.g., roads, schools and hospitals) and businesses plan for the future.

The goal of the 2010 census is to be easy and safe and count all inhabitants of the United States only once. Everyone will receive a short form that can be filled out and mailed back. More than three and one-half million individuals have been recruited, and approximately two million will be hired to work on the census.

Elizabeth assured everyone that the information you give will be held in strictest confidence. The short form has not been printed or made available so that it cannot be copied or misused before the actual census is taken. Title 13 is the

(Continued on page 4)

Local League News Briefs

Board Highlights

- Membership renewals are over. We have 88 members. A new Membership Directory was in preparation.
(Note: Since the Board meeting the new Membership Directory was printed and either picked up or mailed. If you have not received your copy, please contact Pat Pedersen for delivery and with any corrections to your contact information.)
- Raffle tickets are still available for the Americana Quilt. Pat Pedersen and Bonnie Burn are scheduled to sell tickets at the Farmer's Market on Saturday, August 8.
(Note: In addition to ticket sales, voters were registered.)
- Telephone system: The League's new voice mail system is working beautifully. Easy access from any location makes it convenient to answer calls and respond promptly.
- Fund raising and development were the focus of the remainder of the meeting. Two documents distributed at the 2008 LWVUS Convention were reviewed: (1) Successful Fund Raising from Individuals and (2) Writing Fundraising Letters for Impact. Board members reviewed a worksheet that collected thoughts about the impact of the League in the community. Next steps will be taken at the September Board meeting when letters for a prospective fund drive in the fall will be reviewed and a schedule for the drive will be developed.

Study Completed

Needed Resources and Services for Mentally Ill in Doña Ana County

Becky Beckett and Mickey Curtis, Co-Chairs

We are pleased to announce that after visiting over nine sites and having a focus group with consumers and family members, our study is completed. We are scheduled to report to the LWVGLC Board on September 8. Watch for more information in October in *The VOTER*.

The sites we visited included: Southwest Counseling Center, Mesilla Valley Hospital, Memorial Medical Center, Families and Youth Inc., Doña Ana County Health and Human Services Department, Crisis Intervention Training/Jail Diversion/Crisis Triage Center, Tresco Inc., The Arc, and Southern New Mexico Human Development. We were unable to get a response from The Peak and the Ability Center.

Your League study group: Mickey Curtis and Becky Beckett; co-chairs, and members Sharon Burbano, Marilyn Lowe, Christina Little, and Bonnie Burn

Mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of, but stigma and bias shame us all.
Bill Clinton

Look Back *(Continued from page 3)*

federal law that targets confidentiality of information. Anyone violating it can be imprisoned for four years and fined \$250,000.

Counting is not an easy task. The initial phase of the census was to verify addresses. This should enable mailing of the short form to the right place. Other issues, however, could result in people not being counted. Counting students (at colleges or universities rather than at home), transitory folks (marinas, parks, or homeless), and prisoners (in prisons outside of their home state) to name a few categories of the population that might be missed.

The census does not involve enforcement. Employees do not report to immigration or the police. If census-takers believe they are being followed, they cease their activity and call their supervisor.

April 1, 2010 is census day. Look for the short census form in your mailbox, and return it promptly.

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.

Joint City / County Work Session July 21, 2009

Marjorie Burr, Observer

The Las Cruces City Council and Doña Ana County Board of Commissioners met for their scheduled quarterly work session on Tuesday, July 21.

Of the three discussion items on the agenda, the one drawing the most attention was **Formation of Solar and Renewable Energy Districts**. In the last session of the NM Legislature, two bills were passed allowing for financial help for people who install renewable energy. SB697, rather than HB572, is the bill most likely to produce results. The NM Association of Counties is working on model ordinances that can be used for counties wishing to implement renewable energy districts. The County of Santa Fe and the City of Albuquerque are already developing their own ordinances. The Doña Ana County and City of Las Cruces ordinance will be the first joint effort. It is noted that the county must be the lead agency in developing these districts.

The probable sequence of action is that the county would form a "district" and adopt guidelines for operation and for property owners who wish to participate. Next, it would issue special assessment bonds. Then property owners who wishes to make improvements on their property would apply for financing through this district; a lien would be placed on the property taking precedence over all other liens except ad valorem tax; and the property owner would repay the loan through the property tax system. The benefits to the property owner are that this arrangement will pay the up-front costs of installing solar or renewable energy improvements, although the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) will help the property owner through tax credits after installation. The lien will transfer to any new property owners, and utility bills will decrease. Many solar contractors were on hand for this meeting and expressed strong support for creation of this district. There are many unanswered questions in this "cutting edge" concept. County Community Services Director Chuck McMahon has been directed to make a

presentation on the topic at the August meeting of the Board of County Commissioners.

The next item on the agenda was **Reflections Regarding Extra Territorial Authority (ETZ) / Participation and Current Joint Powers Agreement (JPA)**. This item initiated by Commissioner Oscar Vasquez Butler was intended to put forward citizen concerns about the ETZ and the JPA enabling it. Staff presentations made some of the issues clearer. For instance, this observer did not know that ETZ work is divided between the city and county, with the city controlling subdivision regulation, and the county controlling zoning regulation. This makes for opportunities for miscommunication, particularly as to responsibility for permitting (e.g., issuance of occupancy permits when there are problems). There are many misperceptions about the ETZ. For example, the city staff (not the ETZ board) may administratively approve minor subdivisions of eight or fewer units. A principal concern of citizens is that no public input is required in the proceedings of the ETZ board. The consensus of the work session was that this issue should be revisited after the Vision 2040 process has been completed, which may recommend changes in the ETZ.

The last item on the agenda was **Air Quality and Emission Standards in the City of Las Cruces and Doña Ana County**. The topic was quickly covered, as the meeting had by now run more than three hours long. It was noted that air quality is an issue that does not respect governmental boundaries and thus should be dealt with jointly.

Regents Meeting – July 29, 2009

New Mexico State University
John Lazaruk, Observer

The New Mexico State University Board of Regents met on July 29, 2009. Interim President, Manuel Pacheco, met with the Board in the Regents Room at the NMSU campus following

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LEAGUE OBSERVER REPORTS (Continued)**School Board Meeting - August 18, 2009***Pat Pedersen, Observer*

Present for this meeting were President Connie Phillips, Bonnie Votow, Serena Schoop and Superintendent Stan Rounds. Absent were Chuck Davis and Maria Flores.

Several acknowledgments were made. The new principal of Mayfield High School, Israel Hernandez Carrera, was introduced and spoke a few words. The superintendent spoke to the issue of the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data that measure student progress. The information shows that only six schools met all criteria of these standards, but several other schools have improved a great deal. Superintendent Rounds stated that if all 37 criteria are not met, the school fails. There was a brief discussion of high school graduation rates; reported as 43%. There are many factors affecting graduation, and a study is needed to find out if these rates are accurate.

Several budget items were discussed. The person who handles the school bonds made a report. Some of these bonds are to be sold at this time to pay for some construction expenses. The financial report was read. Superintendent Rounds stated that work has started on the new high school which is due to open in the fall of 2011. There is concern that the state may ask the districts to cut 5% from the school budget. The legislature is meeting in a special session in October, and until then there will not be cause to take any action. The new school salaries were presented for three categories of employees. They include an incentive for employees who upgrade their education and skills as required to do their respective jobs. The salary scales were voted on and ratified.

Superintendent Rounds stated that the process to web stream all of the school board meetings is starting, and in the future it should allow everyone access to the web version of many meetings, school events, and activities.

A presentation was made involving the Safe Routes to School Program that is a national effort to encourage students to bike and walk to school.

*(Continued on page 8)***School Board Meeting - July 28, 2009***Nancy Phillips Observer*

The Board meeting lasted only 50 minutes. It was attended by President Connie Phillips, Chuck Davis, Maria Flores, Associate Superintendent Steve Sanchez, and Bonnie Votaw. Absent were Serena Shoop and Superintendent Stan Rounds.

Most of the discussion involved budget matters. The District has been given State funds to provide identification and instruction services to students with dyslexia, based on statistics showing 15 to 20% of the population in New Mexico has some degree of reading disability. Many of these are school-age children and 85% of them have dyslexia.

The budget for utilities in all schools is on target at this point in time. There will be a progress/expense report in the fall to determine any need for readjustment.

There was discussion of setting a three-tier salary structure for instructional support staff, to enhance the recruitment of high quality providers. This issue will be postponed until the National Education Association (NEA) contract is negotiated.

There have been some problems with the District receiving timely reimbursement for expenses from the State. Some programs, including Title 1, are reimbursed within 60 days. The Finance Department will submit a "white paper" to the Board with specific examples and analyses of the problems after which the Board will determine an approach to present to the State Board.

The district wants to deal with the need for a more competent approach to testing. Seven districts in the state are using a growth model that assesses each child's growth from year-to-year rather than using test scores to determine progress. This issue was moved forward.

Ms. Flores reported that there will be a recycling training session for teachers on Saturday morning at Desert Hills.

LEAGUE OBSERVER REPORTS (Continued)**The South Central Recycling Partnership***Al McBrayer, Observer*

The August 13 meeting of the South Central Recycling Partnership, (SCRaP), was canceled. Patrick Peck was out of town. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 10, 2009.

In the mean time, I received an inspirational report concerning the "Waste in Place Workshop" coordinated by the National Keep America Beautiful trainer, Sue Smith. She trained 50 Las Cruces Public School teachers in "the Art of Litter Prevention, Solid Waste Management and Recycling." The Workshop was held on July 29. Libby, the Labrador, and her handler, Javier, also attended the workshop to promote "Waste in Place."

Tim Gray from New Mexico Environment Department, Solid Waste Bureau-Outreach, has invited SCRaP members to participate in the Recycling Stakeholders Meeting in Albuquerque, on September 16. Patrick Peck, director of the South Central Solid Waste Authority, will be attending. My wife Terri and I are also planning to attend. The stated objective of the meeting is to "review the bills brought forth in the 2009 legislative session, discuss pros and cons of these various bills, and then work toward setting priorities for the development of meaningful, realistic legislation that all can support to increase recycling in the state." This should be an exciting meeting, and I will report results in the next issue of *The VOTER*.

Regents Meeting, NMSU *(Continued from page 5)*

the scheduled Retreat at the Holy Cross Retreat Center on July 28th. An update of the University Master Plan was presented by Michael Rickenbaker, the University's Architect. The Convention Center has been delayed while the construction of the Native American Cultural Center will begin shortly. Dolores Connor, Las Cruces City Councillor, described city planning of an underpass at Triviz and University, and the city's review of the University Avenue corridor. The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for Friday, September 25, 2009, in the Regents Room on Campus.

Las Cruces Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Committee**August 12, 2009***Cathy Mathews, Observer*

During the citizen participation portion of the meeting, an issue of potential interest to the League was brought up. Mr. Cal Traylor asked the Committee for support for his idea of a city park to be located at the site of the shooting of Sheriff Pat Garrett. The site is located near or on the proposed extension of Mesa Grande Drive, and Mr. Traylor requested that the road be routed around the site. Mr. Cadeña, chair of the committee, asked for the committee members' consent to allow him to write a letter of support for the park. Committee consent was given.

The first item for discussion on the agenda included additions to the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). Four additions were approved without discussion. The fifth and sixth proposed additions elicited quite a bit of discussion. Mike Johnson, Public Works Director of the City of Las Cruces and Herb Torres of the Las Cruces Public Schools requested that portions of Sonoma Ranch Boulevard and Peachtree Hills Road be added to the TIP. Two new schools are under construction in the vicinity of these two roads. The private developer who promised to build the extensions of these roads so that the schools would be serviced backed out of the commitment to the schools.

The only objection to the proposed addition to the TIP was voiced by Commissioner Karen Perez. She noted that the LCMPO process was being circumvented and that perhaps better planning on the part of the LCPS could have prevented this circumstance. Also, she questioned the role and responsibility of the State and the LCPS in paying for and constructing these roads so that appropriate access would be provided to the new schools. The addition of both Sonoma Ranch Boulevard and Peachtree Hills Road projects to the TIP passed with only Commissioner Perez voting no.



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FIRST CLASS

September 2009
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COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS

- Alta Vista Animal Clinic
- John Ameriks, M.D.
- Binns Construction & Realty
- Joseph P. Camunez, DDS
- Compass Bank
- Doggie Dude Ranch And Cat Farm
- First American Bank
- Horizon Mechanical, Inc.
- Carole Jarden
- Joanne Korsmo
- La Paz-Graham's Funeral Home
- Lilley Law Offices
- Francisco Mario Ortiz, Esq.
- Tate Associates

Thank You

School Board Meeting—August 18, 2009

(Continued from page 6)

Members of the public noted that the food allergy policy has not been put into place to allow children with severe food allergies to attend school this fall.

Staff from Alma D'Arte brought attention to the school as no longer a local school but as a state-run charter school, the first one in Southern New Mexico.

Dr. Sanchez did the first reading of a new written policies on the "Suspension or Expulsion of Students," and on "Reporting Acts of Violence and Vandalism." Policies require three readings before being adopted to allow for discussion and public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

**JOIN THE LEAGUE TODAY - Bring a friend
with you!**

Membership Type

Individual ___ \$50

1st & 2nd Household ___ \$75

Contribution to the League \$ _____

Contribution to the Education Fund \$ _____ (tax deductible)

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____ **Phone:** _____

Email: _____

Mail checks made out to LWV OF Greater Las Cruces, P.O. Box 8322, Las Cruces,

