

The Santa Fe Voter

Published by the League of Women Voters of Santa Fe County

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President, Jody Larson
982-0776

Membership Chair, Jane Gaziano,
989-8353

Voters Service Chair, Anne McLaughlin
995-9655

CALENDAR

February – Unit Topic: Fair Representation

Note New Dates for Units – Pushed Back One Week!

5 Democratic Presidential Caucuses.....	Polling Places.....	Noon– 7:00 PM
14 State Legislature.....	Legislative Session Ends.....	Noon
***18 Unit Meeting.....	El Castillo Meeting Room	7:00 PM
***20 Unit Meeting	Unitarian Church, Galisteo and Barcelona.....	11:45 AM
13 Board Meeting	League Office	4:00 PM
***23 Unit Meeting	ECIA Clubhouse Living Room.....	10:00 AM
19 Book Club.....	League Office.....	Noon – Brown Bag
26 General Meeting.....	Realtors Association, 510 N. Guadalupe, Ste. E.....	11:45 AM

February General Meeting: Program Planning

Tuesday, February 26, 2008

Santa Fe Association of Realtors, 510 N. Guadalupe, Suite E

Plenty of parking! Easy access!

Bring your lunch and join us in planning our program for next year. We will review studies currently under way at local, state, and national levels of League, and we will brainstorm new ideas for League program at all levels, as well. Our board will review and approve any new studies or other initiatives for presentation to the membership at Annual Meeting in April.

Come let us hear your ideas: what would you like to study at the local level? Bilingual education? Oil and gas drilling and other mineral extraction matters, especially in view of “split estate”? Health care reform, ethics reform, election and voter registration reform, and many other areas can be explored for possible general meeting topics. Get in on the action now, while there is still plenty of time to plan!

Coffee and cookies will be supplied.

MISSION STATEMENT

The League of Women Voters, 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 CORNER

What beautiful days we have seen in January, despite record-breaking cold! Some of us may have responded by huddling under a quilt, others by skiing, snowboarding, or snowshoeing. Whatever your inclination, I hope you have observed some of our gorgeous sunrises and sunsets. In February, I hope the temperatures will rise a bit, the snow will continue in the watershed, at least, and the roads will be clear of snow and ice so that we may all attend our unit meetings and our general meeting, and perhaps get by the Capitol before the session ends - on Valentine's Day, of all occasions.

Our Fair Representation units cover subjects right at the heart of League principles and practices: those centering on our representative democracy. As I have followed the activities of the study group, I have learned a lot about how representation may be accomplished: there are many alternatives to the way we do things here and now. We want to be ready at the state level to advocate for best practices when the state redistricts after the 2010 consensus. So come to these units to learn what has been done so far, and to contribute your ideas for the next year of the study.

Also at our state level, LWVNM has geared up to monitor and support or oppose legislation during the current session. We have joined the New Mexico Coalition to Repeal the Death Penalty, in accordance with a position adopted recently. We are supporting the Health Securities Act, not the Governor's plan, and we are following other health care reform alternatives closely. We are supporting some drug policy/DWI-related reforms. We are also following ethics reforms, and may support (or oppose) legislation depending upon what is introduced. Finally, we are monitoring proposed changes to the public school funding formula, not yet introduced at this writing.

At our national level, LWV-SFC's immigration consensus responses have been submitted to LWVUS. Watch the National Voter as well as our web site for the final outcome.
LWVNM.

Locally, our Action Committee continues to monitor many city and county issues, including the county's proposed oil and gas drilling ordinance, city proposals for the Northwest Quadrant, Santa Fe Public Schools Board activities, and many others.

Altogether, this is an active winter season the League of Women Voters. I trust there is something to engage each of you, and I look forward to greeting and visiting with you at many of our events.

Jody Larson

LOOKING AHEAD....

March, 2008:

There will be no unit meetings in March, but we have other activities for you!

On Tuesday, March 4, municipal elections will take place. You may vote between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. See the City's Website, www.santafenm.gov, for polling places and for early voting information.

The League is partnering with the Santa Fe Community Foundation and other community organizations to present a workshop on community activism and access to local government in recognition of Sunshine Week. See our next issue for date, time, and location.

On Wednesday, March 26, we will hold a General Meeting with County officials for further “sunshine” on local issues and the political process, including the operation of the Board of County Commissioners, accomplishments, problems, and proposals for improvement. We anticipate some lively discussion, including the latest on the oil and gas drilling ordinance. Save the date!

DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS FEB 5

Absentee ballots: The last day to apply for an absentee ballot was January 21. Ballots are due by January 28.

Polling will take place on Tuesday, February 5, from noon until 7:00 p.m. Polling places for Santa Fe County are available at the website below..

For further information, watch the news media and visit the Democratic Party website: www.nmdemocrats.org.

PNM’S INTEGRATED RESOURCE PLANNING

As the amount of electricity used in PNM’s service area grows, the company must invest in additional generation facilities, or alternatively, in what is called demand side management (DSM), which includes both conservation and planned reductions in use by some customers during times of peak demand. PNM’s decision to sell its natural gas division was driven in part by the need to raise capital to finance the investment it expects to make in its electrical system.

PNM allocates its investment dollars through a process called integrated resource planning (IRP). This process involves projecting demand for electricity and projecting capital and operating costs for each potential new generation resource—coal, nuclear, solar, wind, natural gas, and geothermal. When projecting these costs, PNM is required to consider three possible levels of taxes on carbon dioxide emissions, a tax of \$8 per ton, of \$20 per

ton, and of \$40 per ton; carbon dioxide emissions taxes have not yet been imposed, but are expected to be imposed in the future.

Because of the many factors that must be considered when it makes its projections, PNM uses a model. PNM has solicited public involvement in its IRP process, and public IRP meetings have largely been devoted to examining the model and the assumptions that go into it.

Although any interested member of the public may attend these meetings, attendance at most meetings consists of a core group of about 20 people with an interest in electricity, alternative energy, or utility regulation. Members of the group have made many suggestions for improving the model or altering its assumptions.

Two League members (Gail Ryba and Neva Van Peski) attend IRP meetings regularly. Any other member who would like to attend may ask to be added to the public notification list by calling Don Brown, PNM’s Director of Corporate Communications at (505) 241 2882, or sending him an email at don.brown@pnmresources.com. Most meetings are held in Albuquerque, but some are held in Santa Fe.

BROWN BAG BOOK CLUB ON HIATUS

The last meeting of our non-fiction book club will be Tuesday, February 19th. Even with a change to the noon hour, dwindling interest has prevailed. A list of all books selected over the last several years will soon be available on the website. Suggestions for resuming with a new focus can be submitted to Jane Gaziano at 989-8353 or jeg7@aol.com.

February 19th – *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini (author of the *Kite Runner*). Although fiction, this popular novel is set against the volatile events of Afghanistan’s last thirty years and should be the catalyst for an interesting discussion.

MEMBERSHIP

Thank you to all our 169 local and national members for their support of the League.

Welcome, new and renewing members. Please note these additions, changes, and corrections to your membership handbooks.

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elementary schools to K-8; planning for a sustainability magnet school at Alvord elementary school; and the establishment of the position of asset/property manager. Task forces have been appointed to address the drop-out rate and plan for the regional career technical center.

Much is happening and much needs to be done. Funding is a major issue. Santa Fe Public Schools student enrollment is flat if not declining. The state funding formula is based on student enrollment. With no increases in enrollment and increases in salaries, utilities, insurance, etc, some difficult decisions will be required by school board and administration. Recommendations from a state task force on the state funding formula which could result in increased funding to Santa Fe Public Schools will be addressed during the upcoming legislative session. It is unlikely that sufficient funds will be appropriated this year. A major issue for Santa Fe Public Schools is how it will fund the new Southside school. Funds are available from school bonds for the building of the school but operational funds will require cuts in other areas.

Our children are our future. We must be informed about education issues; express our concerns to our elected officials, i.e. school board members and legislators and school administrators; and get involved. Several of our members serve on committees and task forces and volunteer for Santa Fe Public Schools. A way to stay informed is to attend school board meetings on the first and third Tuesday of every month; they are webcast on www.sfps.info The webpage is also a source of information on what is happening in Santa Fe Public Schools.

Carol I. Johnson

OUR SCHOOLS NEED OUR HELP!

In the past year, the Santa Fe Public Schools Board of Education has established policies on student transfers (inter-zone transfers); realignment of schools and facilities; and magnet schools. It has also approved planning for a new Southside school; a plan for district-wide rezoning for the 2009-10 school year; conversion of El Dorado and Gonzales

VOTER SERVICES

By the time the February edition of the Voter comes out, we will have held two Candidate Forums for the March 4th Municipal Elections. Look for the 2008 Voter Guide in the New Mexican, tentatively scheduled to be inserted on Sunday, February 10. Additional copies will be available in the League office and in libraries and other venues after that date. We anticipate holding voter registration drives

in February. If you would like to assist, please contact Anne at 995-9655 or by email at: caunteton@msn.com.

BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY 16, 2008

Donna Reynolds, Secretary

At its regular monthly board meeting held at the League's office on January 16th, the LWV-SFC Board of Directors:

- Announced that the League will request LWV Education Funds to support the Voter's Guide and National PMP payments;
- Appointed Alyson Gilman as Public Relations Chair and she will assist with the layout of the Voters Guide for the New Mexican;
- Agreed to purchase and promote the domain name of LWVSFC.org for use as the League's permanent website address;
- Made arrangements for several board members to attend a Council on International Relations meeting with foreign guests from Germany;
- Agreed to host a General Meeting on Local County Government in March;
- Announced the need for a volunteer to organize voter registration booths/events in the community;
- Reviewed charter amendment information that will be placed in the Voters Guide;
- Received a report from Membership Chair, Jane Gaziano, announcing that LWV-SFC has 168 members and twenty letters have been forwarded to non-renewed members;
- Discussed establishing a telephone tree to help increase member participation at local meetings, forums and events.

The next Board Meeting will be at 4:00 p.m. on February 13, 2008, at the LWV-SFC Office. Board meetings are open to all members.

LWVUS PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY VOTER GUIDE AVAILABLE

The national League's Voter Guide to the presidential primaries is now available at www.LWV.org! You can read the candidates' responses to fundamental and fair questions that somehow do not get asked in the usual "debates." You can also read the ground rules behind who was asked to contribute.

If you do not have access to the Internet but would like to read the guide, please call the office and we will send you a copy.

WEB SITE UPDATE

Please visit our website to see our latest additions. By the time you receive this VOTER, our local positions should be posted. We have been keeping our calendar up to date, and study group reports are also available. Election information and other voter services are easily accessible. Let us know what you think and how we might improve!

HELP WANTED – WEBMASTER

Can anyone help out with this? Please contact me at 982-0776 or dtlars@aol.com. Our Webmaster (Webmistress?) has moved on to other duties, and we need someone to keep our site updated. This amounts to about two hours per month of fairly simple work. I will greatly appreciate your support!

Jody Larson



League of Women Voters of New Mexico
Study Group Updates:

Fair Representation



13 January 2008

“Democracy is not a spectator sport.” Thus ends each e-mail message from the LWVNM’s Fair Representation Study leader, Cheryl Haaker. The study committee is investigating an array of ways to define districts, register voters, and even to cast and count votes. The ways we do these now are most certainly not our only choices. Read the following reports from the committee to understand the scope and progress of the study. Then come to our unit meetings in February to learn more about representative democracy and some ways we might improve our practices in New Mexico, and to contribute your ideas.

Jody Larson

Submitted by

Progress of the Study

The group has been meeting on the 4th Tuesday each month, excluding November, which was done (unsuccessfully) by email, December, which met early due to Christmas, and January, which met earlier, to plan February presentations and may meet again before then. All meetings have been held at Chair Cheryl Haaker’s new house at 5701 Klondike St NE, Albuquerque.

Each month, at least two reports or other summary information are developed and posted to the web page, www.lwvabc.org/fair. Newly added: “Alternative Electoral Systems” by Katherine Campbell and “A snapshot of Three State Leagues Pursuing Redistricting Studies” by Judith Binder. (Summaries of these articles are included here.) Additional links and lists have been added to the web page, as well, including links to the International IDEA Handbook and a study of electoral methods by the Washington State League.

The study group will be giving unit meetings in February, March, and April for all four local Leagues. Each presentation will outline the reasons for the study, define terms needed for understanding redistricting and representation, and discuss a series of questions designed to learn the membership’s feelings about what issues are important and where the League can make a difference. Summaries will be posted to the web page; responses will be used to guide the direction of the study, with a goal of working toward consensus in the fall.

All members and guests are welcome to attend any of these unit meetings. If you want to keep up to date, join the listserve, LWVNMFair@yahoo.com. Just send an email to cheryl@haaker.org to get an “invitation.”

Submitted by Cheryl Haaker, Study Group Chair

Reports from the Fair Representation Study Group:

Alternative Electoral Systems: Summary

In order to represent the population in a legislative body, is it sufficient merely to depoliticize the drawing of boundaries for single member plurality (SMP) voting districts? We use SMP electoral systems to elect the U.S. House of Representatives and both houses of the New Mexico state legislature. It is noteworthy that almost the only democracies in the world that use such systems are former colonies of Britain, and even many of those countries have rejected it in recent years. Pure proportional representation systems are not likely to take hold in the United States, but mixed systems combine the advantages of SMP systems with those of proportional representation (PR) systems. PR system advantages include fewer “wasted” votes, increased opportunity for third parties, and more accurate reflection of the political views of the electorate in the legislature. They also

tend to be associated with significantly higher levels of voter turnout and of minority and women representatives. In a mixed system, some legislative seats are filled from geographically defined single-member districts while others are filled by the parties in proportion to the overall (state or national) party preferences of the voters. As the next reapportionment cycle approaches, New Mexicans need to give serious thought to whether using a different system for at least one house of its bicameral legislature might do more to promote fair representation than merely tinkering with the boundaries of SMP districts

The full article can be found at <http://www.lwvabc/fair/> or in the Albuquerque Voter.

Submitted by Katherine Campbell, Member, Fair Representation study group

A Snapshot of Three State Leagues Pursuing Redistricting Studies: Summary

Fair Representation and how our government is chosen takes many forms, and the history of partisan gerrymandering – carving out legislative districts with safe seats that protect incumbents and certain districts for each party – is well known. Even the Voting Rights Act has been used to concentrate minority voters into a small number of districts. The investigation of reapportioning legislative districts following the decennial census and who makes those decisions has been taken up by LWV members around the country. Leagues have investigated and lobbied to protect the right to vote. Let's take a look at Washington, Ohio, and Maryland.

The full article can be found at <http://www.lwvabc/fair/> or in the Albuquerque Voter.

Submitted by Judith Binder, Member, Fair Representation study group