

the VOTER

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INSIDE

Calendar & Events	2	Who's Who	6
League at Legislature	3	Observer Reports	7-8
New Member Orientation	3	Community Connection	9
Electrification Study	4	Book Club	9
Otero Unit Networking	5		

Co-Presidents' Communiqué

Hi League Members,

The NM Legislative session goes quickly when it lasts only 30 days (every other year), but many members have been working diligently to advocate for several issues, including education, gun safety, and modernizing the Legislature. Thank you Kathy Brook (state co-president), the LWVNM Action Team, and local members, Jane Asche, Eileen VanWie, Rebecca Courtney and others who have contacted legislators to encourage their support in these areas.

You'll recall that SNM identified five specific areas for advocacy: independent committees to address redistricting and to pay our legislators a salary (both would require Constitutional Amendments); education; protecting water resources; and violence prevention (gun safety).



Although the state league's Action Committee takes the lead in "lobbying," our members as individual citizens are also advocating for issues that fall under our priorities. There is a fine line between lobbying and advocacy which must be followed in protection of our 501(c)3 status. Read more about advocacy [here, on pages 2-3 and 5-7.](#)

During the last half of the Legislative session, take the time to monitor our lawmakers in action. Watch a [committee meeting](#) (click on webcasts) or action when they are in full session on the House or Senate floor; [phone a legislator's office](#) (works better than email) and leave a [brief](#) message with a bill number and whether to pass or not pass.

—continued, page 6

WE NEED YOU FOR THE ANNUAL PROGRAM PLANNING MEETING

The League is a grassroots organization that believes that people should play a critical role in democracy. The goal of the Program Planning process is to achieve collective agreement on our annual workplan or "Program" and move our mission forward in 2024-25.

At the February 10th General Meeting (our Annual Program Planning meeting) members will be invited to join breakout groups to discuss whether to *update* existing local positions or develop a *new* local position through the study and consensus process. New or updated positions allow us to take action on issues that we care about, but currently are unable to advocate for because National, State and local League positions are silent on the issue or are outdated.

If we need a new or updated position, we study the subject and determine whether there is a consensus among our members leading to a new position. For example, our 2023-24 program includes studies and unit consensus meetings on whether to amend the local League's education and affordable housing positions (see page 4).

Members will also be invited to share which of the *existing* League's national, state or local positions they want to dedicate time to this year, to take action on or advocate in support of.

Prior to the meeting, we are asking members to do a little homework. Please take a look at the current SNM program listed in your recent edition of the SNM Handbook ([online pages 8-16](#)) and review the current LWVSNM Positions. **We are also asking all members to download and fill out a short questionnaire and bring it with you to the meeting.** [Click here for the PDF version](#); [Click here for a Word version](#). You can also email your answers to betbardwell@gmail.com.

—continued, page 2

PLANNING MEETING cont.

Your answers to five simple questions will help us organize our breakout discussions better and allow time for meaningful discussion during the meeting.

The hybrid meeting at the DACC Workforce Center, 2345 Nevada Ave., will begin at 2:00 p.m. (Log in a little early, please.)

At the conclusion of the meeting: 1) we'll have a much better idea of what our members believe should be the study and advocacy priorities for the next fiscal year; 2) the League Board will have direction when formalizing what should be recommended to the membership for approval at the April Annual Meeting; and 3) we can establish a pathway when developing the action piece of our work during the summer Visioning Lab.

- *Beth Bardwell, Vice President*

2023/24 LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO BOARD:

Jo Galván Nash & Kathe Kanim – Co-Presidents

Beth Bardwell – Vice-President

Edwina Jaramillo – Secretary

Kathy Brook – Interim Treasurer

Kathy Brook & Eileen VanWie – Past Presidents

Dale Yeo – Voter Services Co-Director and
Co-Director - OPEN

Kate Mangelsdorf – Membership Director

Eileen VanWie & Josie Miller – Youth Engagement
Co-Directors

OPEN – Public Relations Director

and

Nancy Stanton — Development Chair

Jo Galván Nash – The Voter Editor

Kate Mangelsdorf, Chair, and Johnnie Aldrich,
Members – Nominating Committee

OPEN — Historians

Claudia Powell & Tom Krajci — Otero Unit Liaisons



Please help out ...

- ✓ Work for the next couple of months on the Nominating Committee. Contact [Kate!](#)
- ✓ Join one of our committees that focus on voting, youth & civic activities, education, housing, or developing partnerships through fundraising. Contact a Co-President if you're interested.
- ✓ Post occasional messages on **Instagram**. We need more posts to spread our messages to others.
- ✓ Volunteer to be a League historian. We gather LWVSNM documents for safekeeping at NMSU's archives.

Upcoming Calendar Events

FEBRUARY 2024

Black History Month

Feb. 5, Mon.: Regular Board Meeting; 5pm, Zoom

Feb. 6, Tues: **Affordable Housing Comm.**, [Zoom](#), 3:30pm

Feb. 10, Sat.: **Program Planning Meeting**, 2pm, DACC Workforce Center, 2345 Nevada Ave., in-person and online

Feb. 12, Mon.: **Education Committee**, 5pm, Zoom, contact [Eileen](#) for a Zoom link.

FEB. 14 – Learn About:

Anniversary of LWV

1 Billion Rising Campaign in 2024

V Day

Ash Wednesday

Feb. 19, Mon: **Presidents' Holiday**

Feb. 20, Tues.: **Short Board Meeting**, 5:30 pm, Zoom

Feb. 22, Thurs: **Education Committee Mtg.**, 5pm, Zoom

Feb. 24, Sat.: **Educational Meeting on Electrification Technology and Energy Equity**, 2 p.m., [Zoom](#)

Feb. 29, Thurs.: **1st Consensus Mtg.** regarding Electrification, 5:30 pm, Zoom (OR, Sat., March 2 at 2pm)

League Days at the NM Legislature

Though I have been a League member for many years, I have only been to League Days in Santa Fe once previously. That one experience in 2020 was a good one as it focused on celebrating the LWVUS centennial. The speaker was Virginia Case Solomón, LWVUS CEO. (Virginia will soon be leaving LWV to join Common Cause.)

This year was also a very good experience. LWVNM had three information tables in the Roundhouse, featuring the state and local Leagues, the Election Integrity Project (with which LWVNM is involved), and Fair Districts New Mexico which was launched by LWVNM in support of fair redistricting.

Later in the day on January 24, there was an opportunity for League members and friends to hear from our speaker, Attorney General Raúl Torrez. The attorney general spoke of his background and particularly about his interest in early intervention with children.



The following day, about 25 of us met at the State Land Office near the Roundhouse to hear presentations on redistricting by Heather Balas, League member and VP for Programs at the Election Reformers Network, and on equitable taxes and revenues by Paige Knight, Deputy Policy Director for NM Voices for Children. The slides from both presentations should be available soon at www.lwvnm.org. Also attending from LWVSNM was Melissa Ontiveros. Participants at the State Land Office received packets highlighting LWVNM priorities for the legislative session and providing information on contacting legislators.

Thinking ahead to next year, a 60-day session, consider making time to participate in this great activity. You'll learn more about the League and the legislative process.

—Kathy Brook, Past President and LWVNM Co-Pres.



New Members Share Ideas

The LWVSNM welcomed four new members at our New Members' Orientation on January 27: Susan Ansara, Diana Bustamante, Ernestina Akorfa Akorli, and Cassie McClure. Eight current League members also attended. During the orientation, Eileen VanWie reviewed the origin of the League of Women Voters as a result of women earning the right to vote in 1920, as well as its history in New Mexico. Kathy Brook focused on connections between the national, state, and local leagues and the procedures that govern the League's operation. Our co-chairs described their vision for the coming year, and several of our committee chairs explained their current study and advocacy.

We enjoyed talking with our new members. If you're a new member but couldn't attend this orientation, we will offer another one in June.

- *Kate Mangelsdorf, Membership Dir.*



BUILDING ELECTRIFICATION AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING STUDY

There is a clean energy revolution underway in the United States to transition from reliance on fossil fuels to more renewable and efficient energy. The goal is to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and mitigate their impact on a warming planet and climate-linked extreme weather. This past summer, after 30 consecutive days of 100+ degree weather and the absence of monsoons, I felt myself leaning into this goal.

The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) identifies top 10 actions where local leagues can make a critical difference in curbing global climate change. One is increasing energy efficiency in buildings through electrification.

Building electrification technology includes heat pumps or ductless mini-splits, heat pump hot water heaters, and induction stoves. These energy efficient electric appliances can replace electric resistance heating, electric resistance hot water heaters, gas furnaces, gas hot water heaters and gas stoves. Building electrification technologies use less energy and reduce GHG emissions. They can also improve health and safety.

Middle-to-high income households have the resources to either buy new homes that are all-electric or convert their existing homes to all-electric when they replace existing appliances. To ease the transition, Congress passed the Inflation Reduction Act authorizing \$8.8 billion in rebates for home energy efficiency and electrification projects.

But what about low-to-moderate income households? Lack of income, credit and homeownership can limit disadvantaged communities from accessing building electrification technologies. Studies predict that low-to-moderate income households that continue to rely on gas for heating will disproportionately carry the financial burden for “stranded assets” or indebted investments that the utility companies have made in gas utility distribution systems as the number of fossil fuel customers dwindle. Low-to-moderate income households are also more vulnerable to being disconnected from utility services and, if they live in older housing stock or “urban heat islands,” are the first to experience the adverse impacts of extreme weather.

More than 25 years ago, our local league approved an Affordable Housing position to support current and future efforts to increase the availability of safe, decent and affordable housing for moderate- and low-income households through four actions. At that time, building electrification was not a topic of concern.

As part of the 2023-24 local league program, a subcommittee of the League’s Affordable Housing Committee agreed to look at updating our Affordable Housing position. We undertook a study and wrote a report that outlines the issue, and takes a close look at the benefits, concerns, and feasibility of transitioning to building electrification technology. [You can read the report here](#) on our local league website, under the Program and Positions menu.

Now, we need your input in whether to amend our local affordable housing position.

Please join us for an educational presentation by two top local experts in building electrification technology and energy equity for low-to-moderate income households on Feb. 24th at 2:00 PM over zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3589738432>.

Attend one of two consensus meetings on Thursday, February 29th at 5:30 PM or Saturday, March 2nd at 2:00 PM over zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3589738432>. At this meeting we want to hear from you and other league members whether there is consensus to amend the Affordable Housing position to link beneficial electrification programs & policies to affordable housing.

Thank you for helping us consider whether to update our local position on affordable housing and allow us to take action on the issues facing affordable housing in an age of climate change.

■ *Beth Bardwell, Vice-President and Chair of the Affordable Housing Committee*



Otero Unit Networks with Youth Learning About Democracy

An enthusiastic group of Girl Scouts in Alamogordo (Troop 10234) have been working intently on earning their “Democracy” badges with guidance from elected officials, Girl Scout leaders, and members of the Otero County Unit of the League of Women Voters of SNM.

In a unique activity, Daisy, Brownie and Junior scouts recently underwent a democratic process of voting on whether cats or dogs are the better pets. Troop Leader Stacy Eriksen reported they “shared their campaign points...and Claudia [Powell of the Otero Unit] created questions and moderated a debate between them. Eriksen reported that Claudia was so patient and kind with the girls — she was awesome!

Eriksen said after all of the girls voted, they were told the percentage of people who voted in the local General Election last November was only 20% of those eligible. To make this understandable to the scouts, Eriksen asked only 3 of the 15 girls to stand. “They didn’t like that those three could have determined if cats or dogs were better,” she added.

Older scouts also had a chance to visit with Otero County District Judge Ellen Jessen who inspired the troop with her personal story of becoming a judge. They also visited with Alamogordo Mayor Susan Payne in the City Commission Chambers and the Mayor gave them a tour.

In a whirlwind 10-minute overview, Eriksen’s presentation described how our government works. It covered who created the Constitution, and how “We the People” had a role in it. She also explained the three tiers of federal government.

“I made sure to point out all of the women in government — from the local level with the Mayor and County Commission, to the state level with our Governor, to the national level with our Congress and VP — explaining how, due to the electoral college, we almost had a female President.”

The scouts also learned statistics on the number of former Girl Scouts in government — there are many! Our first woman on the Supreme Court was a Girl Scout, as was our current state Governor, she said.

“We discussed the lack of voter turnout in elections and the girls were disappointed to hear that so few people voted, after having been through their own mock election. Hopefully, it will inspire them to become active voters in the future,” Eriksen added.

Lastly, the LWVSNM Board congratulates Claudia and the Otero Unit for their connection with the girls and the community.

▪ Stacy Eriksen, Jo Galván Nash & Tom Krajci



Above, Claudia Powell from the Otero Unit stands with the representatives for the “cats” and the “dogs” which helped demonstrate a voting process.

Below, District Judge Ellen Jessen meets with the 6th-to-10th grade Senior and Cadette scouts. Now that the “Democracy” badges have been earned, the girls will begin work on “Citizen” badges which encourage community service, public policy, voting, government, and more.



Troop Leader Stacy Eriksen works to inspire the scouts to lead positive change through civic action. Her daughter Astrid is a Daisy Scout and daughter Molly is a Cadette.

Photos courtesy of Troop 10234.

Do You Know “Who’s Who”?

Since it is close to the time LWVSNM usually publishes its printed version of the Who's Who Guide to Elected Government Officials (in Doña Ana County) and to the time I will retire from creating the online and the print publications, I would like to present some information.

The Who's Who has long been created and published by the League, although it is only in more recent years that it has been online. This last year it had been published in print and the pamphlets were placed in Branigan Memorial Library (Reference Desk), Las Cruces City Hall, and the DAC Government Building. Contacts at these places have reported that the Who's Who is not in as much demand as our Voters' Guides and usually want only one hundred of them or less. We also save some for the League's own uses, such as sending to donors or as something to give at presentations.

I have checked the web statistics in our Internet provider Stormweb and found that there were 804 views of the posted current Who's Who in 2023. (Remember that “views” are the number of people, i.e., computers - coming to see the Who's Who document, but they may be the same person coming many times and/or from different devices.)

Keeping the Who's Who accurate is labor intensive. The basic form of the Who's Who stays mostly the same but must be updated regularly because of elections, changes in salaries, resignations of officials, and contact changes, among others. It probably takes at least two people to keep checking the information in it often to see that it is reasonably up to date and making the necessary changes in the template so it can be re-posted on our website. The Who's Who should be thoroughly checked and updated at least once a month.

After elections in November it is January when the newly elected officials take office and their new contact information is available. I have acknowledged the newly elected officials with an update in November which includes both the old and new officials. The printed version is probably somewhat out of date right after it is published. We include a reference to the website where pamphlet users can go to get updated versions. We have published the print edition in late January while it is still fairly current.

If you have not visited the Who's Who recently, please go and take a look at it on www.lwvsnm.org.

- Dale Yeo, Voter Services Director

In Memoriam

It is with deep sadness to report the passing of the 20th President of the League of Women Voters of the United States. Dr. Deborah Ann Turner died unexpectedly on January 28, 2024, in Washington, D.C. A prolific leader and fearless advocate for voting rights and women's rights, her commitment to the League of Women Voters is immeasurable. Our prayers are with her family. [Read more about Dr. Turner.](#)

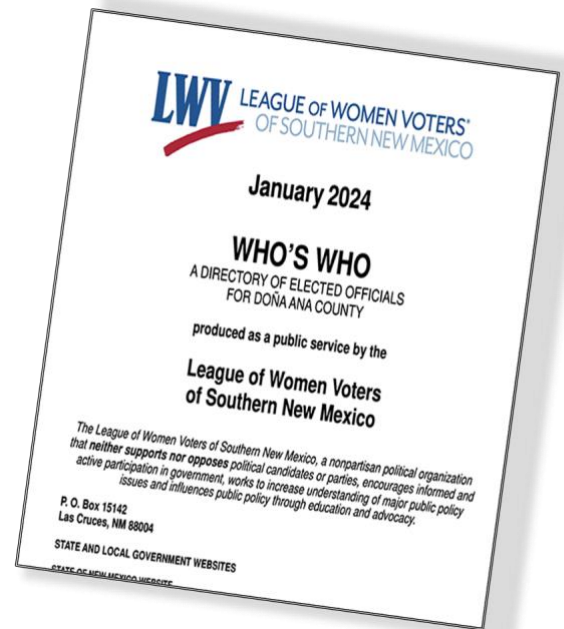


Co-Presidents' Message cont. from page 1

You can also take a look at the [2024 tracking sheet](#) maintained by the LWVNM Action Team to see what bills are in the hopper and what committees they must pass through in order to head to House or Senator for action.

The session ends at noon on February 15. It will be interesting to see how many bills that the League followed will make their way to the Governor's desk for her signature.

- Jo Galvan Nash and Kathe Kanim
Co-Presidents





OBSERVER REPORTS

LAS CRUCES CITY COUNCIL • Regular Meeting

January 2, 2024

Observer: Kathy Brook

The Las Cruces City Council held the first meeting of 2024 on Tuesday, 1/2/2024. Johana Bencomo was elected to be Mayor Pro Tem. There were three bills to change zoning designation. All three passed. One resolution passed to develop an asset management plan for water and wastewater infrastructure.

LAS CRUCES CITY COUNCIL • Regular Meeting

January 16, 2024

Observer: Kathy Brook

A major item at the meeting was the acceptance by the council of the annual comprehensive financial report for FY 2023. It was noted that the report provides information beyond the minimum requirements and that the City has, for 20 consecutive years, won awards for excellence in financial reporting. Participation in a business incentive program to attract jobs paying above average wages was also approved.

Public input items included the need to improve our animal control ordinances, advocacy for access to health care at MMC Cancer Center, immigration, traffic calming, the second amendment, and a cease fire in Gaza.

LCPS BOARD OF EDUCATION • Regular Meeting

January 16, 2024

Observer: Jo Galván Nash

In attendance: Teresa Tenorio (chair), Robert Wofford, Patrick Nolan, Pam Cort, Ed Frank; and Superintendent Ignacio Ruiz

The Board and audience congratulated several teachers, administrators and students, and outgoing School Board Member Carol Cooper, for their outstanding accomplishments and statewide awards.

The District's lobbyist Cris Balzano, via teleconference, urged the Board to exhibit a strong presence in working with Legislators for educational funding during the Legislative session. He will provide a tracking list for bills of significance to the district and Board. The District's five capital outlay requests have been submitted for consideration. Three of the requests are: \$1million for a Career and Technical Education Center, \$4.6 million for a family support center, and \$500,000 for an outdoor classroom at the Teaching and Learning Center (at Loretto Towne Centre).

Meanwhile, the Board reorganized its officers and selected: Teresa Tenorio was elected to remain as President for an additional year; Pamela Cort as Vice President; and Robert Wofford as Secretary. The Board then selected newly elected Board member Ed Frank as chairman of the District Audit Committee, while Robert Wofford will again be the chairman of the District Finance Committee. (Finance meetings are open to the public and recordings can be [viewed here](#).)

Finally, Board Member Patrick Nolan was reappointed to the Doña Ana Community College Advisory Committee, and Ed Frank will be on the LCPS Foundation Board; Patrick Nolan was selected for the LCPS Community Schools Committee; President Tenorio and Pam Cort were reappointed to the Equity Committee; and President Tenorio will remain on the NM School Boards Association.

Numerous Board policies were also approved including: KJJ-Community Schools; GCO-Evaluation of Staff; and GBAA-Gender Equity for Staff.



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS • Regular Meeting

January 23, 2024

Observer: Jo Galván Nash

Members Present: Christopher Schaljo-Hernandez (chair) and Manuel Sanchez; and via WebEx were Diana Murillo, Shannon Reynolds and Susana Chaparro; and County Manager Fernando Macias.

A hot topic during the meeting came during public input. Susie Kimbel of Mesilla Valley Hospital was one of many residents and health care professionals addressing their concerns over the impending lack of a provider for the County Triage Center. She said it was designed to ease congestion of local emergency rooms and said subsidizing the Center by the County is imperative. Kimbel said many people will suffer from lack of service. Another citizen described the crisis assistance she received at the Center. Another resident said there are multiple crises—fentanyl, homelessness, and mental health—that must be met. He said the money expended by the County to hire a provider is necessary. A representative from the Crisis Center gave kudos to the Center’s staff and he advocated for it to remain open.

In response, Commissioner Sanchez said it wasn’t an easy decision two weeks ago to end the existing contract with Recovery Innovations (RI), a non-profit organization. He said in 2022, there was a request by RI to double the budget from \$500,000 to nearly \$1 million. Then, two weeks ago, the discussion regarding funding unexpectedly was resurrected. Commissioner Schaljo-Hernandez remarked he is in support of the Crisis Center and its services and was open to hearing the public’s comments. He said the County needs to find a provider that will strive for the best services for all county residents. Commissioner Chaparro said the state offered funding to keep the Triage Center open until June 2024. She felt that would have given more time to find another provider or find another solution to keep it open. County Health and Human Services Director Jamie Michael said they are looking for a new provider to get the services flowing again.

Regarding elections, a citizen commented on election integrity and voter fraud. He said voting machines have been a problem throughout the country as have mail-in ballots and drop boxes. He cited other states where lawsuits were filed and alleged fraudulent instances have taken place. He also questioned whether algorithms are working in New Mexico elections.

In other business, the County Code of Conduct ordinance was postponed (on a vote of 3-2) to the next meeting, citing “it wasn’t drafted well” by Commissioner Reynolds. The County’s attorney said the proposed language was provided by Commissioners but agreed it can be revised before action.

Community Connection

NAACP Celebration

The LWVSNM proudly sponsored a table at the Jan. 15 breakfast by the Doña Ana County Chapter of the NAACP. The keynote was New Mexico Attorney General Raúl Torrez. The yearly breakfast is in celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his legacy.



Those in attendance at the MLK Breakfast event included (left to right) Charlotte Lipson, Marci Beyer, Edwina Jaramillo, Jon Holtzman, Beth Bardwell, Elisa Sánchez, and Cynthia Pelak. Behind the camera is Eileen VanWie. All are current members of the League.

UPCOMING GOVT. MEETINGS

LC City Council:

Feb. 5; Feb. 12 (work session); Feb. 20; Feb. 26 (work session) all at 1:00 p.m., City Hall

County Commission:

Feb. 12 (Special Meeting); Feb. 27; all at 9:00 am, DAC Govt. Center.

LCPS School Board:

Feb. 6 (Board Retreat), 9:00 am, LCPS Admin. Bldg. Conference Rm A/B.; Feb. 20, 6 pm, Regular Meeting; LCPS Admin. Building Board Room.

Books for LWVSNM Book Club – February 2024

We read so we know things

BOOK CLUB MEETINGS ARE ON 1ST THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH

If you would like to participate, contact Erika at grafwebster@icloud.com

Books Selected for Upcoming Meetings

Feb 1	Oath and Honor: A Memoir and a Warning by Liz Cheney <i>A gripping first-hand account of the January 6th, 2021, insurrection from inside the halls of Congress, from origins to aftermath, as Donald Trump and his enablers betrayed the American people and the Constitution—by the House Republican leader who dared to stand up to it. Cheney tells the story of this perilous moment in our history, those who helped Trump spread the stolen election lie, those whose actions preserved our constitutional framework, and the risks we still face.</i>
March 7	END TIMES elites, counter-elites and the path of political disintegration by Peter Turchin <i>This book offers a big picture birds eye view of how political leaders have dealt with the kind of crisis we are in now, the reason civilizations inevitably reach this kind of crisis, and how things have turned out both positively and negatively. “Peter Turchin brings science to history. Some like it and some prefer their history plain. But everyone needs to pay attention to the well-informed, convincing and terrifying analysis in this book.” —Angus Deaton, winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics Peter Turchin, one of the most interesting social scientists of our age, has infused the study of history with approaches and insights from other fields for more than a quarter century. End Times is the culmination of his work to understand what causes political communities to cohere and what causes them to fall apart, as applied to the current turmoil within the United States.</i>