

# The VOTER

## *League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces*

**March 2017**



**David J. Armijo**

David J. Armijo has over 30 years experience in government and is a highly recognized executive working in aviation, toll roads, and transportation. Armijo has served in leadership roles in government agencies in California, Florida, New Mexico and Texas.

Early in David's career he served as Director of Transit and Aviation, managing the start-up of operations for the Santa Fe Transit system. The "Santa Fe Trails" bus system was the first transit operation in the United States to operate solely on compressed natural gas (CNG). In 2009 Armijo served as team leader for the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP's) International Transit Studies Program fall 2009 mission to South America, publishing a report for the transit industry on the growth in transit ridership.

David is currently serving as the Executive Director, South Central Regional Transit District, responsible for implementing the start-up of bus operations in Doña Ana County with service to Las Cruces, Alamogordo, Anthony, Chaparral, Sunland Park and connecting service to El Paso, Texas. In addition, David is project manager for the regional Passenger Rail study with service between Las Cruces and El Paso.

David has a master's degree in public administration from California State University, Long Beach, and was awarded Graduate Student of the Year. Since 2002 David has worked as an adjunct professor, teaching graduate courses on Leadership, Human Resource Management, Contract Negotiation and Executive Management. In 2004 California State University, Long Beach acknowledged David as Alumnus of the Year, Department of Public Policy and Administration.

David has a long history of civic service, serving as an American Public Transportation Association Board Member, Executive; Legislative and Work Force Development Committees and has served as co—chair of the Conference of Minority Transportation Officers COMTO's Succession Planning Committee, and the California Hydrogen business Council. Locally he is a member of the Las Cruces Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, NGage New Mexico and Strong Families New Mexico.

djarmijo2011@gmail.com

***Dinner with a  
Leader –  
Please join us on  
March 13 at 5:15 –  
7 pm, Good Sam's  
\$12  
RSVP by March 6***

[shoemaker714@gmail.com](mailto:shoemaker714@gmail.com)  
or Gwen at 556-9251

***“Public  
Transportation in  
Doña Ana County  
& Surrounding  
Areas”***

## President's Message

Welcome and thank you to Bonnie Votaw, our new VOTER Editor. She is actively working on a short timeline to begin offering a monthly newsletter to our membership. This year has passed very quickly, and we have missed a robust description of our activities – which have been numerous.

As we enter the month of March, we acknowledge the eagerness with which we await the arrival of Spring and the fading of cold weather and winter skies. The turning of the calendar brings a new focus to our planning process as we look to April's Annual Meeting. The February Program Planning Meeting was the beginning of that formal planning for next year. SAVE THE DATE for the Annual Meeting, April 15, 2017, at the Good Samaritan Social Center. You will notice that a March-April calendar is included for your own planning purposes.

Our March monthly meeting will offer the opportunity for our members to learn more about the public transportation system in Dona Ana County and surrounding areas. Our speaker will be David Armijo, Executive Director of South Central Regional Transit District. Plan to join us for this very interesting presentation.

This is a dynamic organization with an energetic and passionate membership. Invite your friends to join you as you attend and participate in League activities. We welcome Spring and all the renewal that it brings to our organization. Join us!

## CALENDAR March – April 2017

### March 2017

- **March 2** – LWVGLC March Board Meeting, 2:00 pm, Branigan Library Board Room
- **March 8** - International Women's Day
- **March 10** – Women's History Month at the Round House, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m., Santa Fe
- **March 11** – LWVNM Board Meeting, 11:00 a.m.- 2:30 p.m., Santa Fe
- **March 13** – Dinner with a Leader: David Armijo, SCRTD, "Public Transportation in Dona Ana County & Surrounding Areas", 5:15 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., Good Sam's
- **March 16** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday Book Club, Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood By Trevor Noah, 2:00 p.m., Home of Gwen Hanson.
- **March 18** - NM Legislative Session Ends
- **March 21** – Dona Ana County Election Advisory Council, 4:00 p.m., DAC Bldg.

### April 2017

- **April 6** – LWVGLC April Board Meeting, 2:00 pm, Branigan Library Board Room
- **April 15**– LWVGLC Annual Meeting, 9:00 am -1:00 pm, Good Sam's
- **April 20** – 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday Book Club, Thank You For Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving In the Age of Accelerations by Thomas L. Friedman, 2:00 p.m., TBD.

**League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces**  
Notes from Annual Program Planning Meeting  
February 13, 2017

Reports from Committees were presented. Discussion and action highlights are included below for the record and for further consideration or implementation by the League in fiscal year 2017-2018.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING** - Chris Little reported the Committee's current focus is to monitor affordable housing trends and policy by at least one committee member attending public meetings of the Board of Commissioners of the Mesilla Valley Housing Authority. Discussion followed and included how the League might energize advocacy for affordable housing since the publication of this chapter's Affordable Housing Study and position. One area of exploration and advocacy is support of General Obligation Bond (GOB) issuance in Las Cruces or Dona Ana County, so funds are available for construction/renovation of affordable housing units. Nathan Small, former City Councilor and now NM State Representative, was identified as being a strong supporter of the League's position. As for a local champion of affordable housing, Jack Eakman, City Councilor, may be a good candidate. Christine Sorg will do some investigation and report back to the League on possible champions in the local governments and community. It was also acknowledged we need to advocate for a working definition of "affordable housing" which derives from individual/family economic realities and that would be recognized by local governments and developers. A final suggestion was that the committee should look at the trend in and working examples of communal living, especially for elder populations.

**CHORAL INTERLUDE** - The Cactus Chords, a men's 4-part harmony singing group, surprised us with a pre-Valentine Day song. Steve Litts, the League's Treasurer is a member of the Chords.

**EDUCATION** - Bonnie Votaw reported that the committee remains nominally active. She gave a brief history of how the NM state constitution was amended in 2003 to change the source of authority for the management of state funds and programs related to education. From 1986 to 2003, a ten member the voters elected NM State Board of Education, with one from each of the ten judicial districts. The State Board of Education then appointed a Superintendent of Instruction that carried out the day-to-day work of financial and program management in the Office of Instruction under the direction of the State Board. The 2003 constitutional amendment gave this authority to a cabinet level Secretary of Education appointed by the Governor. A ten member NM Public Education Commission (PEC) replaced the NM State Board of Education. Voters in each of the ten judicial districts also elect the members of the PEC, but its authority is strictly to be an advisory group to the Secretary of Education, who has the authority to over-ride any of the PEC's recommendations.

Activity of the committee going forward will be to assess whether this arrangement for oversight of the management of education funds and programs is in the best interest of student education outcomes, and, if not, advocate for state legislation that would depoliticize the position of the NMPED Secretary. The committee will also continue to monitor mandated actions of the PEC, which is charged with authorizing creation of charter schools in NM and reviewing them for meeting administrative and student performance standards set for chartered schools, remembering that all decisions of the PEC can be over-ruled by the Secretary of Education.

LIBRARY - Sharon Shoemaker reported that there are plans for a GOB to support the building of a separate Children's Library adjacent to Branigan Library and to expand services to other parts of the city with branch libraries.

COUNTY GOVERNMENT - The library report above sparked a lively discussion about mobile library services to citizens outside of Las Cruces, especially to the communities of the southern part of the County. Mike Milam suggested a study of what we could advocate for in the realm of mobile library and communication resources (computers and Wi-Fi service) and/or inspired use of bricks and mortar community centers in the southern county communities. This appears to be a multi-impact idea that relates to the League's positions on youth engagement, education/literacy for all ages and quality of life issues. It could be a way to also bring the community centers back to life in the southern county communities. An ad hoc committee comprised of Mike Milam, Erika Graf-Webster, Sharon Shoemaker, Yvonne Flores, Jane Asche and Lizz Taylor will explore this idea further, identifying champions/allies, programmatic opportunities and possibly developing a strategic plan for advocacy.

Yvonne announced the meeting of County Commissioners tomorrow at 9am in the DA County Government Center on Valley Drive. Members were encouraged to attend these meetings as well as the work session meetings of the Las Cruces City Council held at City Hall.

IMMIGRATION- Yvonne Flores reported the committee is officially inactive, meaning activity is suspended and the committee is dormant.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT - Erika Graf-Webster presented a proposal for a new study to determine the relevant issues that are impediments to voting and civic engagement among two different groups of millennials. The first group would encompass youth ages 18-22 and the second group is those young adults aged 23-29. The goal of this study is to determine what factors hinder or discourage young people from voting in Doña Ana County. A motion was made to accept the proposal as presented; it was seconded and approved unanimously.

PRESIDENT - Gwen Hanson reported she and Steve Litts have been evaluating LWVGLC board members' personal liability, after there was some confusion about the national LWV's endorsement for local leagues' participation in the Women's March in January 2017. Gwen and Steve will continue to locate information and resources that will help alleviate liability against individuals, including HB224 which is before the NM legislature this session and has provisions that would extend limited liability to non-profit organizations. Gwen and Steve are also inquiring into bonding for the Treasurer position.

*Continued on next page*

*Notes from Planning Meeting Continued*

**NOMINATING - Johnnie Aldrich presented the slate of officers for fiscal year 2017-2018 and thanked committee members Bonnie Votaw and Sharon Shoemaker for their work. The slate is:**

President – Kim Sorensen

Vice President – Sharon Shoemaker

Treasurer – Steve Litts

Secretary – Connie Lee

Chair of Nominating Committee – Jane Asche

Elected Member of Nominating Committee - Sadie Valverde

Director of Membership – Sue Lashley

Erika encouraged the committee and the Board to rejuvenate the Program Director functions as part of the Vice President's responsibility.

BYLAWS - Gwen Hanson advised no recommended changes to date. However, the committee, together with the Board of LWVGLC, expects to draft revision of our "empty chair" policy. Current policy prevents the League from engaging in any public forum, debate or conversation with candidates for elective office that accept invitation and are present at the forum when one or more of the candidates decline to participate. Gwen said the committee would be looking at the model policy put forward by the Minnesota state league.

Gwen thanked those present for participating and said she values the annual program planning conversations as **productive**, refreshing and stimulating.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lizz Taylor and Jane Asche

**League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces**  
**Highlights of LWGLC Board Meeting**  
**February 2, 2017**  
**Branigan Library, Roadrunner Room 2:00 PM - 3:53 PM**

**LWVGLC Business - Ongoing Administrative and Operational Activities**

In attendance: Gwen Hanson, Yvonne Flores, Dale Yeo, Steve Litts, Vicki Simons, Sharon Shoemaker, Ardyth Norem

Visiting Members: Sue Cain, Kelly Burnham

Review of Agenda

- There was discussion of upcoming Immigration studies.
- Johnnie Aldrich requested that she report the Nominations Committee results as a first item on the agenda. The Nominating Committee is comprised of Johnnie Aldrich, Bonnie Votaw, and Sharon Shoemaker. The slate of nominated members was announced. These nominations will be offered for election at the April 2017 Annual Meeting.

Discussion of January Minutes and Director Reports Members will review the minutes via email and submit any additions, corrections, or approval.

Additional discussion addressed

- An “Empty Chair” statement will be generated to officially document the candidate forum policy of LWVGLC. The document will include the date it was endorsed and adopted.
- Dale Yeo will put a link on the LWVGLC website listing the availability of the KRWG video recording of the LWVGLC-KRWG Candidate Forums for School Board Positions 1, 2 & 3, Las Cruces Public Schools, held January 24, 2017.

Financial and Membership Report

- Income and expenditures, bank balance. A detailed report by Steve Litts identified current status and items in process.
- There is one new member this month: Mary Parr-Sanchez.

Voter Services

- Dale Yeo reported that Who’s Who has been updated and is soon ready for printing. Discussion focused on getting bids for printing costs and how many copies to print. The current estimate is to print 2,000 copies.
- Vicki Simons brought a box of printed materials some of which may be outdated. The board suggested that she discard all outdated materials. Steve Litts made a motion to authorize all chairs of committees to dispose of outdated materials. The motion passed unanimously.

- The board thanked Dale Yeo and Vicki Simons for their work in setting up the Candidate Forums for the School Board Elections.

### Studies and Committees

- a. The Youth Engagement Task Force will be making a proposal for a study at the Program Planning Meeting, February 13, 2017.
- b. The Immigration Committee is being reinstated and will make a proposal for a study, which will focus on family reunification and the effects of prosecution of undocumented aliens on families.

### NM Legislative Session

- League Day and reception is scheduled for February 8 and 9, 2017, Gwen Hanson, Ardyth Norem, Kim Sorensen will be attending League Day events in Santa Fe.
- LWVGLC Members are encouraged to contact Joanne Ferrary in support of the Health Security Act, House Bill 101, and Joseph Cervantes to support Senate Bill 102. Sue Cain indicated that League members can lobby legislators on policies that have been adopted by the National and State leagues indicating, "I am a member of the LWV." If there is no official policy in the national or state leagues members can lobby on issues but not reference the LWV policies or their membership in the League.

### Agenda for the Program Planning Meeting

All members are encouraged to write up their proposals for projects and activities for the next year and present them to the membership for discussion at the February Annual Program Planning Meeting. These proposals will then come back to the Board for discussion and approval for inclusion at the Annual Meeting. There are current plans for additional Immigration and Youth Engagement proposals.

### **New Business and Activities**

Report of the Nomination Committee This report was submitted at the opening of this meeting (see item 1 above).

### Activation of Budget Committee and Report of Bylaws Committee

- The Budget Committee has met and will submit a report at a later date. Members of that committee are Gwen Hanson, Steve Litts and Sharon Shoemaker, and Kim Sorensen.

- The ByLaws Committee has met and has no changes to propose. A written statement will be submitted to the next Board meeting. Committee members are Dale Yeo and Ardyth Norem.

#### Financial Policies Recommendations

- A document titled “FINANCIAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURE FOR LWVGLC” has been drafted and submitted for review to the board by Steve Litts, Sharon Shoemaker and Gwen Hanson. This draft will be discussed at the next board meeting.
- Insurance liability was a focus of extended discussion. Vulnerability to litigation needs to be minimized. Sharon Shoemaker, Steve Litts, and Gwen Hanson will make inquiries in search of an optimal protective policy.

March Dinner with a Leader Speaker is David Armijo, South Central Regional Transit District

May Dinner with a Leader Speaker is Ken Miyagishimi, Mayor of Las Cruces.

LWVNM Statewide Convention will be held in Santa Fe on May 20

The featured speaker is Valorie Plame.

#### LWVNM Resolution on Immigration and Deportation

Yvonne Flores will develop a draft to recommend to the board next month, based on the LWVNM Resolution, approved at the January 28, 2017 LWVNM Board Meeting.

ADJOURNED



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE  
UPDATE ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING  
February 2017

The City of Las Cruces produced several important policy documents on affordable housing during 2016. Both the Consolidated Plan and the Affordable Housing Action Plan included significant updates on the subject of affordable housing.

#### BACKGROUND MATERIAL

- Generally housing is considered to be affordable if the total for rent and utilities is less than 30% of the families income. With home ownership, the banks sometimes look at 35% as being acceptable.
- The Area Median Income (AMI) is determined each year by HUD for each city. The 2015 number for Las Cruces is \$45,200 a year for a family of four. The 2016 and 2017 AMI is not expected to change dramatically.

#### RENTAL HOUSING

- In 2016, there were 5,228 households with incomes at 0-30% of AMI. The upper level annual income for this group is \$13,500. Affordable rent would be \$243. There were 633 units that fit the criteria with a need for an additional 4,595 units.
- In 2016, there were 3,407 households with incomes at 31-50% of AMI. The upper level annual income was \$22,600. Affordable rent would be \$469. There were 3,053 units available in this price range with a need for an additional 354 units.

#### HOME OWNERSHIP

- At 0-30% AMI (income of \$13,500), households can afford a house costing \$63,000. There are 17 houses that fit this criterion on the market. To meet the need, an additional 1,461 units would be needed. A household at this income level would need a subsidy of \$99,500 to purchase a median priced home.
- At 31-50% AMI (Income of \$22,600), a household can afford a house costing \$105,000. There are 1,390 potential buyers, 172 available units, and 1,218 units needed. Buyers would need a subsidy of \$57,500 to purchase a median priced home.
- At 51-80% of AMI, a household would need an income of \$27,130 for a house costing \$126,000. There are 723 potential buyers in this category with a supply of 87 houses and an additional 636 needed. Buyers of a median priced home would need a subsidy of \$35,500.
- People making more than 80% of AMI do not need subsidies. The market is adequate.

#### CURRENT STATUS

Low Income Tax Housing Credits (LIHTC) are the most effective tool for creating affordable rental housing. The Mortgage Finance Authority (MFA) (the organization that administers the tax credits) has determined that Las Cruces has a high number of vacant two bedroom, two bath apartments.

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Low Income Tax Housing Credits (LIHTC) are the most effective tool for creating affordable rental housing. The Mortgage Finance Authority (MFA) (the organization that administers the tax credits) has determined that Las Cruces has a high number of vacant two bedroom, two bath apartments. This has lowered the City's point count and presents a constraint to multi-family rental housing development. Tierra del Sol has applied for a tax credit development on the East Mesa, so this may not be a fatal problem.

The City of Las Cruces has slowly begun the process of being better prepared to support the development of affordable housing. It has created a land bank and trust fund, which now has approximately \$500,000 in assets. The City Staff is working to prepare the policies and procedures that will allow for the implementation of the Affordable Housing Land Bank and Trust Fund. There is also an appointed Advisory Committee which will be asked to provide input and which may play a larger role in the future.

When asked how many affordable rental units were created in the past five years the response was, "The City has assisted 115 households with Tenant Based Rental Assistance during the past five years. Tierra Del Sol Housing Corporation did complete construction of 24 units of farm labor rental housing with rural development funding assistance and tax credits through MFA."

#### FUTURE PLANS FOR RENTAL HOUSING

- The Affordable Housing Plan projects that during the next five years, 150 rental units can be created without disrupting market conditions. The 150 is a number based on what the staff believes is possible, given City and Federal funding constraints and past record.
- A preliminary goal is the development of the Sierra Grande property on Spruce. The staff anticipates that this could accommodate up to 30 units. It is not decided whether these would be rental or home ownership. This is City land in the Land Bank.
- A developer will be able to apply for funds from the Trust Fund but will have to bring substantial additional resources to the project.
- It is possible that the \$500,000 in the Trust Fund could be used to pay for a portion of the infrastructure costs.

Given the slow progress in the development of affordable housing, participants at the League Program Planning meeting urged the Affordable Housing Committee to shift into an action mode and to encourage elected officials to proactively seek solutions and results. One of the suggestions that we can make is to consider general obligation bonds for the future.

The Committee welcomes new members. For more information contact Chairs, Vicki Simons (522-4813) or Christina Little (373-1882).

Committee Members – Jane Carter, Christina Little, Vicki Simons, Christine Sorg

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#### **LOOKING FORWARD for The VOTER**

*I will be formalizing due dates for upcoming VOTERs for those of you who contribute and I will try to get a reminder system going. I will also be formalizing format – once I learn to use this software. It has been a long time since I was an editor, but it is stimulating to get back into the work. B. Votaw*