

AUGUST 2020

Report from The LWVSNM Committee for Humane Immigration Reform

The LWVSNM Committee for Humane Immigration Reform is a group of League members who have been meeting since February 2019 to study the impact of the humanitarian crisis in our border region stemming from the administration's zero-tolerance immigration policies. Our goals are to raise awareness among League members at the local, state and national levels – and also among the general public – and to press the League to lobby for reform of the immigration system. To that end we have met monthly to educate ourselves through various means, including: 1) guest speakers; 2) meetings and ongoing communications with legislators; 3) reaching out to other League chapters; and 3) a field trip to El Paso to meet with Customs & Border officials; Rubén Garcia, Director of Annunciation House; and an immigrant family.

Our research and volunteer activities have led us to believe that immigration reform should be a top tier priority of the League at the local, state, and national levels. Toward this end we drafted an Advocacy Statement for Humane Immigration Reform which was approved by both the LWVSNM Board and the LWVNM Board (This document is on the League's website). At the League's National Convention in June there was a caucus on immigration at which Meredith Machen, Director of Immigration from the LWVNM, made a copy of our local advocacy statement available to attendees. Although the LWVUS did not make immigration reform a top tier priority, it did make it a second-tier priority.

The Committee also designed several public projects with the goal of keeping the plight of asylum seekers waiting in Mexico for their hearings in the minds of people in our community. We were ready to launch three outreach efforts around the time our State shut down due to COVID-19. These projects include: 1) an interactive mobile unit on immigration, to be launched in a kiosk at the Mesilla Valley Mall; 2) KRWG interviews with individuals working in immigration rights organizations; 3) profiles of volunteers who served refugee families in temporary shelters in Doña Ana County to be published in the Las Cruces Bulletin; and 4) a series of lectures in the Academy of Learning in Retirement by NMSU faculty on the root causes of poverty and violence in Central America.

With Covid-19 taking center stage, KRWG Public Media in Las Cruces has not been able to air interviews and the Las Cruces Bulletin has not published any of our volunteer profiles. We are grateful that The Voter will feature a volunteer profile each month.

In May 2020, our committee revised the Advocacy Statement in light of changes in immigration policies. At the request of the Board, we also drafted a Position Statement on Immigration and presented it to the LWVSNM Board at their June meeting. A decision was made at the meeting to seek input on this statement from League members at two zoom meetings on August 11 and 13, 2020, at 4 pm. We hope to see you at one of these meetings. In early August you will receive by email a copy of both the revised Advocacy statement and the Position statement.

—Christine Eber, LWVSNM Immigration Committee