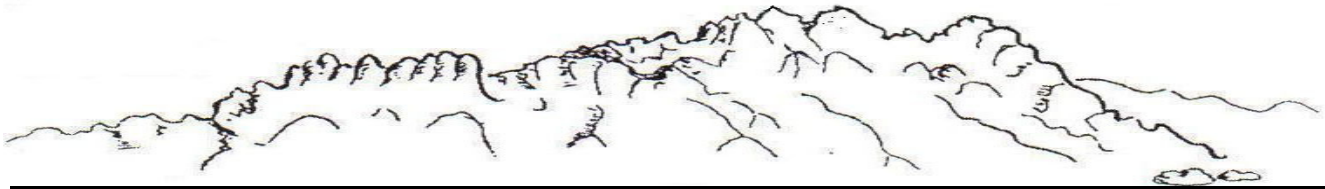


The VOTER

League of Women Voters
of Greater Las Cruces
(575) 524-VOTE (8683)
Web Site: www.lwvglc.org
December 2011



IT'S A HOLIDAY SOCIAL Instead of Lunch with a Leader



League work is serious! Well, that's true until it's time to party!
Members and guests are invited to join us for a Holiday Social. We
haven't gotten together socially for awhile, and we thought it would be
fun to have a holiday celebration. Here are the details:

Saturday, December 10, 2011, 2-4 p.m.
Carol Jackson's Home, 4451 Superstition Dr., Las Cruces
Bring an hors d'oeuvre to share - Beverages provided

CALENDAR

December 1 (Thursday) - **New Member Orientation**, 6-7:30 p.m., Bonnie Burn's Home, 6955 Camino Nuevo Mejico, Picacho Hills, Tel: 526-0013.

December 7 (Wednesday) - 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., **Board Meeting**, Branigan Library, Board Room.

December 10 (Saturday) - **Holiday Social**, 2-4 p.m., Carol Jackson's Home, 4451 Superstition Dr, Las Cruces, Tel: 522-5402. Directions provided with e-copy of The VOTER or included with printed copy.

Save These Dates

January 14 (Saturday) - **Legislative Breakfast**, 9-11 a.m., Good Samaritan's Social Center, Main Dining Room

January 23 and 30 (Monday) - **Affordable Housing Unit Meetings**, 10-11:30 a.m., Conference Room, Good Samaritan's Social Center

January 24 (Tuesday) - **League Day at the Legislature**, sponsored by LWV of New Mexico, Santa Fe

*No Lunch with a Leader in December or January
Legislative Breakfast, January 14, 2012*

The VOTER

Volume 42, Issue 8 - December 2011
Published Monthly

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

P.O. Box 8322
Las Cruces, NM 88006-8322
(575) 524-VOTE (8683)
Web Site: www.lwvglc.org

President - Bonnie Burn

Vice President & Program
Paula Nielson

Secretary - Martha Duran

Treasurer - Ruth Benjamins

Director, Membership
Roberta Gran

Director, Voter Services
Erika Graf-Webster

Nominating Committee

Chair: Vicki Simons
Elected Member: Sadie Valverde

STUDY GROUPS**Affordable Housing**

Vicki Simons - 522-4813
Christina Little - 373-1882

Education

Bonnie Burn - 526-0013

**Mental Illness Services
in Doña Ana County**

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

Metropolitan Court

Marjorie Burr - 522-2528

ACTION COMMITTEE

Vicki Simons - 522-4813

Web Master - Dale Yeo

Newsletter Editor

Bonnie Burn - 526-0013
burnb@comcast.net

Board Highlights

November 2, 2011, 10-11:30 a.m., Branigan Library, Board Room

The entire Board meeting was devoted to the issue of Fund Raising to meet the League's needs for general election related voter services activities in 2012. We need to meet a goal of \$5,000.

A 16-page *Voters Guide*, that will cost us approximately \$4,500, is a must for the 2012 General Election. We have just paid a \$2,017 bill to The *Bulletin* for the 2011 Las Cruces municipal election Voters Guide that leaves us with a balance of \$810 in our Education Fund—a far cry from our \$4,500 needed in 2012.

As you know, our voter services activities provides the greatest visibility for the League in the community. Our candidates forums are sought out by prospective individuals running for elected office, and we were more than pleased to have our October 5 Candidates Forum rebroadcast many times on the City's Cable TV, Channel 20. Voters call our League phone number to determine how they can get accurate, trustworthy information about the upcoming election. Our web site report shows that more and more people are accessing our web site, especially when our *Voters Guide* is posted there.

To prepare for the 2012 General Election that includes President, U.S. Congress, all NM state legislators, County Commissioners (District 2, 4, and 5), County Clerk, and other officers, the Board of Directors formed a Fund Raising Committee following a plan outlined by Paula Nielson. Roberta Gran, Director, Membership, has been coordinating the committee: Erika Graf-Webster, Director, Voter Services; Martha Duran, Secretary; and Marjorie Burr, founding member and past president of the League, who has a vested interest in ensuring the League continues.

Activities suggested by this committee and participation in the Southwest Senior Expo (March 16-17, 2011) may net us half of the \$5,000 goal. We are looking at opportunities to increase our community support base, as well as establishing an annuity/will opportunity that would support the League in the future.

As we cope with the current political situation and sift through the ideology, special interests, and the humanitarian needs thrust upon us by decisions made elsewhere, the trustworthiness and reliability of League information seems more important than ever.

Stay tuned for further information about how we can continue to make the League financially viable that will allow us to carry forward our goal of voter education. Remember that the reason we are fund raising is to support voter education.

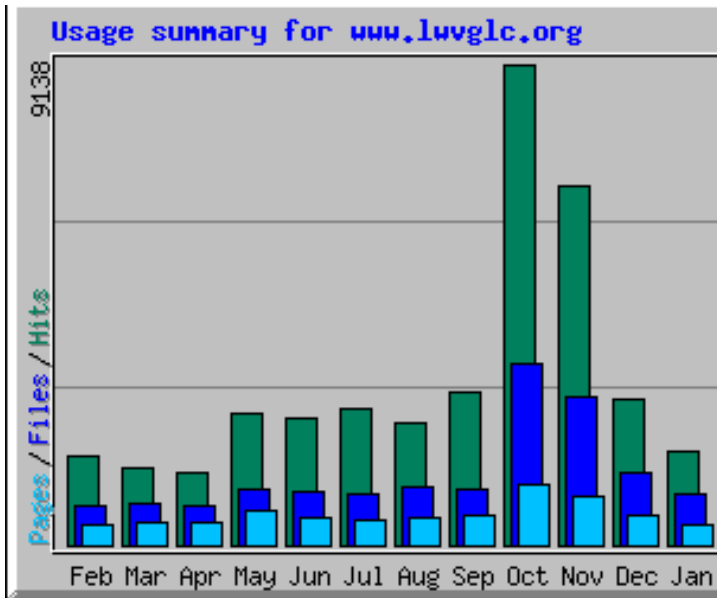
No one will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is **by not voting**.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Local League Web Site Usage Continues to Grow

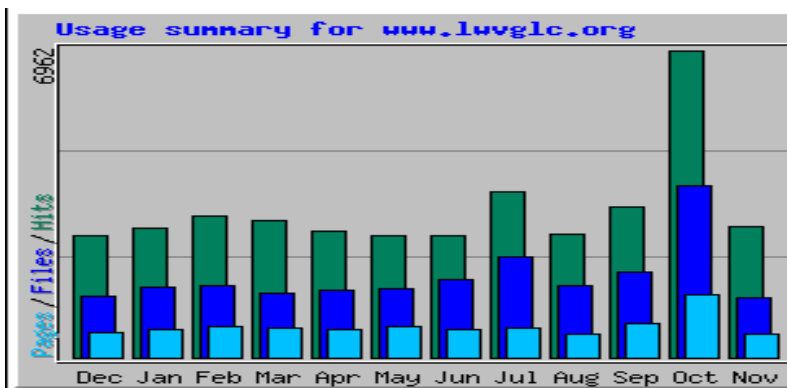
In the March 2011 issue of *The Voter*, web master Dale Yeo reported about the usage of the League web site (see graph below):

FY 2010, Including January 2011



Dale's comments at that time were that before October, 2010, between 300 and 400 people a month were visiting the web site. In October the number rose to an all time high of 707 people. In November 2010, the month during which the mid-term election took place, 596 people looked to the League's web site for information about election information.

FY 2010 through November 2011



In 2011 during the Las Cruces Municipal Election 860 individuals visited the web site seeking voter education information. During the month of November, 301 additional individuals visited the site.

As Dale mentioned in her 2010 report, "if you post it, they will come."



NEW MEMBERS

Gracia Class

Nina Mervine

Christina Pheley

Tel: (575) 373-9510

Email: cm-pheley@hotmail.com

Marge (Margaret) Truesdell

Tel: 521-1884



Happy Thanksgiving

Friends of the League

John Ameriks, M.D.

Biad Chile Ltd. Co.

Joseph P. Camunez, DDS

Citizens Bank

Dental Associates, PA

Doggie Dude Ranch and

Cat Farm

Donald and Winifred Dresp

Adrian and Jackie Edwards

Nancy & Ken Hall

First New Mexico Bank

Edward Jones - Connie Lee

Patricia Kratz

Lilley Law Offices

Louise P. Lockhart

Barbara Myers

Francisco Mario Ortiz Law Firm

Judith Scott and Paul Thomas

Wanda Skowlund

LaJune Smith

Marie Sutter-Sinden

Tom Tate

Zia Engineering & Environmental

Consultants

Thank You

President's Message

This is a period in our country's history when the League of Women Voters is most needed. Our advocacy, backed by our studies and positions, is particularly relevant now, especially on the issues of voting rights and the election process.



When the U.S. Constitution was written, voting was not included in its wording. That white male landowners should have the right to vote was the accepted norm. Three important amendments to the Constitution came about over the years that give **citizens the right to vote**.

The amendments begin: *"To vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of"*

- Race, color, or previous condition of servitude (the 15th Amendment, 1870)
- Sex, (the 19th Amendment that gave women the right to vote, 1920)
- Age (the 26th Amendment that moved the minimum age for voting to 18, 1971)

Voter suppression, a strategy to influence the outcome of an election by discouraging or preventing people from exercising their **right to vote**, has been a part of our political system since the U.S. became a republic. The League believes **that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed**. After a 72-year struggle to gain this right, it is an understandable and deeply held conviction of its members.

Early voter suppression techniques involved **literacy tests** developed in Connecticut (1855) and Massachusetts (1857) that discriminated against Irish Catholic immigrants who labored to build canal systems and worked in textile mills in New England. **Poll taxes** gave the ancient Greeks a method for collecting taxes by counting the heads of its citizens. Poll taxes have always been associated with politics in the U.S. as a prerequisite for voting. This device disenfranchised many African Americans, poor whites, and senior citizens. By the 1940's, most of these taxes were abolished. The 24th Amendment (1964) disallowed the poll tax as a

prerequisite for voting in federal elections. The Voting Rights Act (1965) protected voting rights and through the years (1970, 1975, and 1982) was renewed and expanded the rights. This is the law that is used now in the fight against voter suppression techniques currently being advanced.

Now we are living in the 21st Century, where computers, the Internet, Facebook, and Twitter are accepted as part of daily life, and where people are free to go to the polls and vote. The U.S. government supports democratic efforts across the world, and newly enfranchised voters, for example those in Iraq, hold up a purple index finger to indicate they have voted. BUT what is happening in the U.S.? A new wave of voter suppression techniques are emerging once again.

The voter photo ID is one of the primary issues under discussion and a number of states have adopted this requirement for voting. The League of Women Voters opposes voter photo IDs and believes that the 2002 Help America Vote Act (HAVA), an act passed with bipartisan majorities in Congress, provides for effective voter identification. HAVA requires any voter who registered by mail and who has not previously voted in a federal election to show current and valid photo identification or a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document that shows the name and address of the voter. Voters who submitted any of these forms of identification during registration are exempt, as are voters entitled to vote by absentee ballot under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act.

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin has filed a lawsuit against the State of Wisconsin challenging, as a violation of the state constitution rather than the U.S. Constitution, the voter identification law passed by the state. Remember the 10th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: *the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people*. According to the Wisconsin Constitution only felons and people ruled incompetent are excluded from voting. The challenge argument is that the new law "[creates] a third class of citizens who may not vote—people who do not have ID." Rebutting that we are required to use a photo ID to get a library card, ride on an airplane, and transact business at a bank, the

President's Message *(Continued from page 4)*

Wisconsin League President Melanie Ramey describes these as “generally based on personal business decisions of companies or other entities. They are not rights of citizenship.”

Other tactics being employed are:

- Shortening the deadline for submission of completed voter registration applications to the Bureau of Elections with stiff penalties for late filings. This is directed at third-party voter registrars, a major activity of the League of Women Voters since 1920. For the second time in its recent history, the League of Women Voters of Florida has discontinued voter registration and is suing the state.
- Purging the voter rolls that often disenfranchise eligible voters.
- Ex-Felon Disenfranchisement due to a loss of rights because of a felony conviction: Thirteen states permanently disenfranchise convicted felons, 18 states restore voting rights after completion of prison, parole, and probation, 13 allow felons who have been released from prison to vote and two states do not disenfranchise felons at all.
- Disinformation about voting procedures gives false information about when and how to vote, leading voters to fail to cast valid ballots.
- Caging is a technique whereby political parties eliminate potential voters registered with other political parties. A registered letter addressed to a registered voter is returned as undeliverable. The “returned” fact is used to challenge the eligibility of that voter to vote.

Remember, **voting is a right** not a privilege. As the 2012 NM Legislative Session looms on the horizon, voter photo ID may be among the legislative bills considered again. The LWVNM Action Committee has successfully advocated against this bill during the regular and special sessions in 2011, and will be vigilant again.

Bonnie Burn

Postscript: Please read the article, “Protecting voter participation,” by Meredith Machen, *La Palabra*, Fall 2011, p. 5. This gives further information about Doña Ana County’s former State Senator and current Secretary of State Dianna Duran’s attempt to search for “irregularities” for 64,000 voter files. Also, plan to attend the evening’s presentation, “Voter fraud: facts and fallacies,” scheduled for January 23 (Monday), at the Garrett Desert Inn, Santa Fe, 5:30-7:30 p.m., the evening before League Day at the Legislature

Happy Birthday New Mexico - 100 Years of Statehood (1912-2012)

New Mexico is celebrating its 100th Birthday. A Las Cruces Centennial Committee, chaired by Greg Smith, newly elected Las Cruces city councilor, is planning celebratory festivities.

Among the activities is a parade that follows the historic Camino Real de Terra Adentro (now Mesquite Street and newly reopened portions of Main Street. The parade is grouped into decades. The League has already submitted its parade entry form and will be part of the first group representing Women Win the Vote in 1920.

At its Board meeting on December 7, the Board of Directors will be adopting final plans to participate

in the parade on January 7, 2012. Paula Nielson, Vice President for Programs, is chairing this event.

We are seeking a convertible automobile in which League members may ride. Please notify Paula if you know of anyone who owns such a vehicle. We also are seeking individuals who can carry the League banner and the suffragist flags.

All League members are encouraged to participate. Let Paula know if you will be participating (paulanielson@comcast.net or 386-7957)

For information about local and statewide centennial activities, log on to www.nmcentennial.org.



League News



Education Study - Bonnie Burn, Reporting

The study committee met for a last time on October 28. As you may know after a study is completed and a position is approved by the Board of Directors, the committee actively works on advocacy issues.

The Education Study Committee met for a wrap-up meeting on October 28. Because education is such a vital topic in the forefront of issues being discussed currently, the committee decided that it would continue as a committee under the leadership of Jane Asche and Sue Cain, as co-chairs. Erika Graf-Webster, Roberta Gran, and Bonnie Burn will remain on the committee.

In this capacity, the committee will actively pursue opportunities for advocacy and facilitate a potential community forum.

All new email or regular correspondence should be directed to Jane Asche and Sue Cain. Roberta Gran and Sue Cain will continue as observers at Las Cruces Public School Board Meetings.

Meanwhile, the Education Position, recently adopted by the LWVGLC Board of Directors, was distributed to all individuals who helped with the study, and to our local NM State Legislative Delegation, U. S. Congressmen, and School Board members.

A few copies of the final report, a compilation of all written papers, will be printed and available soon.

League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS)

LWVUS Education Study Moves to

Completion: Local Leagues are reporting the results of consensus meetings held about the "Role of the Federal Government in Public Education," a study adopted by LWVUS at its convention in 2010.

Greater Las Cruces held its consensus meeting on October 24. (Note: Results available on web site, www.lwvglc.org) After approval of the Board of Directors, the results were submitted to LWVUS using an online questionnaire and will be considered with results from all local Leagues. The Study

Committee will analyze the data and write the position for LWVUS Board of Directors approval at its March 2012 meeting.

LWVUS Studies Issue of Privatization: The background papers for this study are now available on the web site, www.lwv.org. There are five papers:

1. The Legal Framework of Transparency and Accountability Within the Context of Privatization
2. Deregulation of Railroads
3. Privatization of Publicly Owned Waste Water Treatment Plant
4. Privatization of Prisons
5. Subcontracting Public Education

Local Leagues will consider consensus during the period January-April, 2012, and submit consensus results by May 1, 2012.

League of Women Voters of NM (LWVNM)

Redistricting: In anticipation of the 2010 U.S. Census, LWVNM studied the issue of Fair Representation and reached a consensus in 2009 that supports having an independent commission or other independent group develop redistricting plans. The State of New Mexico, however, assigned the task of developing the redistricting to a bipartisan legislative committee.

La Palabra, the state League's newsletter, features an article and maps about redistricting in New Mexico. The state League, led by Cheryl Haaker, chair, Fair Representation Committee, organized a major effort to ensure that residents participated in the NM Legislative Hearings held throughout the state. Despite a special legislative session, redistricting decisions about NM Congressional and State Districts will be made in the NM court. We invite you to read the article and view the maps on pages 2 and 3 of *La Palabra*, Fall 2011.

Other states are also having redistricting decisions made in the courts. LWV of North Carolina and Texas have initiated law suits in an effort to ensure that requirements of the Voting Rights Act are followed, and to prevent manipulations to achieve partisan gains and dilution of the power of minority voters.

Look Back - Lunch with a Leader Meetings

South Central Council of Governments: On Monday, October 10, League members listened to an interesting presentation about the work of South Central Council of Governments. In New Mexico the Councils of Governments are divided into seven districts that serve 33 counties, 103 municipalities, three reservations, 19 pueblos and approximately 2 million residents. As a “cog” facilitates the functioning of a wheel, the Councils of Governments (COGs) facilitate local government.

The South Central Council of Governments (SCCOG), District 7, is comprised of Socorro, Sierra, and Doña Ana counties, and its executive director is Jay Armijo. In Doña Ana County, member organizations include: Doña Ana County, City of Las Cruces, City of Sunland Park, Town of Mesilla, and Village of Hatch. Others such as the Doña Ana Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association, and NM State Representatives are members of the organization. Funding to support COG is received from membership dues and a combination of state and federal grants.

COG helps local governments work together to solve common regional issues such as transportation, environment, community and economic development, education and workforce development. Assistance is offered in planning, training, and management services. It assists communities and organizations with application for and receipt of funding from federal, state, private and philanthropic organizations. Because local governments are smaller and resources are more limited, COG has an important role in rural areas. SCCOG in its role with the New Mexico Workforce Connection enables individuals to receive training and help to become employable in a changing work environment.

South Central Council of Governments has a home office in the City of Elephant Butte and a satellite office in Mesilla. It has 15 employees and a budget of approximately \$1.2 million.

Affordable Housing Kick’s Off Study: Vicki Simons and Christina Little, co-chairs, introduced the study process and the three-member panel that presented an overview of affordable housing in our area.

David Dollahon, City of Las Cruces Neighborhood Services Administrator, opened the program with an overview about the work of this organization.



Thomas Hassell, Executive Director, Housing Authority of the City of Las Cruces and the Doña Ana County Housing Authority, was next.



Rose Garcia, Executive Director of Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation, and a League member, concluded the presentation.

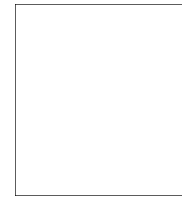
It was interesting to have a recap (in 10-minute presentations) of information presented during the study in articles published by Vicki and Christina in *The VOTER*. The discussion, however, emphasized the size of the need for affordable housing.

- In the City of Las Cruces, there are 4,700 households that cannot find affordable rental units.
- There are 7,600 **rental** households in Las Cruces that are cost burdened (paying more than 30% of their gross income for rent).
- **Home ownership** in Las Cruces, includes 5,200 households that are cost burdened (paying more than 30% of their gross income for mortgage payments, taxes, insurance, and utilities).
- 47% of the all households in the city of Las Cruces qualify as low income.
- There is still a stigma about public housing. The Housing Authority apartments at Missouri and Espina and the Tierra del Sol apartments across (west and north) from Albertson’s at Three Crosses demonstrate that this old stereotype is invalid.
- Foreclosures are becoming an increasing problem in this area. Interestingly, very few homeowners who obtained housing under programs administered by these agencies have had such problems. This is because agencies such as Habitat for Humanity, Tierra del Sol, the Housing Authority, and the YWCA work with clients to make sure that they purchase only housing they can afford.



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FIRST CLASS



December 2011
In This Issue

Holiday Social	1
Calendar	1
Board Meeting Highlights	2
Web Site Usage	3
President's Message	3
League News	4
NM Centennial	5
Look Back	7



Membership Application

Membership: Individual (\$60), 2nd Household Member (\$30), and Students (\$25)
 New Members joining after November 1 pay half-dues.

Name: _____

2nd Household: _____

Address: _____ **City/State/Zip:** _____

Phone: _____ **Cell:** _____ **Email:** _____

\$ _____ Contribution to the League Make Check payable to LWV of Greater Las Cruces

\$ _____ Contribution to the Education Fund (Tax Deductible) Make check payable to
 League of Women Voters Education Fund

All checks should be mailed to

League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces, P.O. Box 8322, Las Cruces, NM 88006-8322

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.