



March 2018

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## ***DINNER March 12 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. at Good Samaritan LWVNM Study – Nuclear Waste Storage***

In part because New Mexico is the site of a proposals for interim (160 years) storage of spent fuel nuclear waste, LWVNM approved a study and formed a statewide committee to revise and update LWVNM's work, ***The Nuclear Waste Primer, A Handbook for Citizens, revised 1993***. Karen Douglas, who is chairing the committee, will be the featured presenter at our March 12, 2018 dinner meeting. Members, this is a significant topic for New Mexicans. Pay attention!

Karen serves as a LWNM Director and chairs the LWV Nuclear Waste Storage Study Committee. Karen holds a Bachelors degree in Biomedical/Nuclear Engineering from UNM and a Master of Science in Materials Science and Engineering from Stanford University.

To prepare members for eventual consensus questions, the Committee is presenting to local leagues and publishing ongoing articles in each issue of ***La Palabra*** to keep you informed of developments in the study as they occur.

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Please plan to attend the March 12, 2018 dinner to further your learning about this important topic. For additional information on the topic and Karen's credentials see the January VOTER.

## ***President's Message***

Greetings Members!



2018: Year of the LWVGLC and Forums! We've been busy! Starting with the Electoral Issues Forum January 30, followed by the Bond Issue Forum on the 31<sup>st</sup>, the Mayoral and Trustee Forum February 8<sup>th</sup>, and the Civic Engagement Forum with KRWGTV February 14<sup>th</sup>. And we've only just begun! The Program Planning Meeting was held February 12<sup>th</sup> with 16 members attending. We decided that we have plenty on our plate:

- Lots of elections coming up and the work associated with them,
- The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Events in full swing, and
- The Youth Engagement Committee plus the study taking off,
- Keeping up with our Observer Corp program and
- Ongoing Affordable Housing monitoring

We concluded that we are already spread thin enough this year – no need to add anything else. However, we would like to bring back the Quality of Life Committee maybe toward the end of 2018 and review the county government and municipal elections positions. I'd appreciate it if you would contact me if you are interested in taking the lead on reviewing either of the positions.

We are very saddened to hear the news about our dear friend Olga Pedroza's passing. The LWVGLC would like to honor Olga as a valued member. Jane Asche has volunteered to collect money from league members who would like to donate. She is looking at the various charities Olga supported, and will choose an appropriate one to which she will send our checks and a card from LWVGLC. Olga was a league member for many years and her contribution to the community was unsurpassed. We will be sending out details in an email soon. See <http://www.lcsun-news.com/story/news/local/2018/02/09/former-city-councilor-olga-pedroza-dies/323846002/> for local coverage.

It's been a bad flu season. I hope everybody has either escaped it or is fully recovered by now.

Warmly,  
Kim Sorensen, President

## ***UPCOMING EVENTS***

March 1	10 – 12 a.m. LWVGLC Board meeting, Branigan Library Board Room <i>You are Invited!</i>
March 12	5:30 – 7:00 p.m. Dinner LWVNM NUCLEAR WASTE STORAGE, Karen Douglas
March 15	3:30 p.m. Youth Engagement Committee Branigan Library Board Room
March 31	11 a.m. – 3 p.m. LWVNM State Board Meeting, Santa Fe



## ***ELECTORAL ISSUES FORUM: A GREAT LEARNING EXPERIENCE***

The first of a series of public forums, part of the LWVGLC 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary observance events, was held on January 30 at the Temple Beth-El. The Community Forum on Electoral Issues was co-sponsored by the Social Action Committee of Temple Beth-El.

The forum was moderated by League member Peter Ossorio and featured three panelists: Scott Krahling, Dona Ana County Clerk and League member; Viki Harrison, Executive Director of Common Cause New Mexico from Albuquerque, and Randy Harris, leader of the Great Discussions of Las Cruces.



Peter Ossario set the tone stating: “Our goal for tonight is for this informed, educated and motivated audience to learn something new or learn

something in a different way.”

The forum opened with a brief presentation of League positions—state, national, and local—on electoral issues, starting with LWV’s principal position protecting the citizens’ right to vote. LWV also has positions on apportionment and redistricting, campaign finance reform, and direct election of the president. State and local positions cover many aspects of election procedures including support for some form of open primaries; simplification of absentee and early voting; Voting Convenience Centers (in place in Dona Ana County); consolidation of “minor” elections; and use of mail-in ballots in some elections.

The panelists offered thoughtful comments on electoral issues. “Our goal in our office is to build a voting culture”, said Scott Krahling, County Clerk. “A turnout of only 9 per cent in local elections is not acceptable.” He suggested that governments should emphasize voter turnout and ensure that voters are informed about all aspects of voting.

Viki Harrison highlighted the Common Cause efforts to foster transparency and ethics in election-related issues and discussed the reasons legislators find it difficult to reform a system in which they have been successful themselves. “There are over 100 bills in state legislatures that restrict the right to vote.” On



the topic of redistricting she said: "People want it. Legislatures don't."

Randy Harris emphasized that in addition to directly working on election issues, one should attack the causes of the problems. "Low voter turnout is symptomatic of a deeper cultural disorder."

These issues permeate much of the League's action in support of electoral reform. It was instructive to hear an articulate and wide-ranging discussion by the panel. The response and questions from the audience indicated Peter's goal was accomplished.

Fifty people attended the forum. Win Jacobs organized the event. The next 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Community Forum is scheduled for July 18 at Branigan Cultural Center on the topic of mental health issues in Dona Ana Count.



## LWVGLC 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion Picnic

**Save the Date**

**Saturday May 5, 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.**

**LWVGLC 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion Picnic**

**Pioneer Women's Park**

**West Reymond Street and North Court Avenue**

**Box Lunch: Cost \$20, prepaid**

*Commemorative Tree Planting*

*Help "decorate" the tree for the occasion.*

*Meet and greet friends, new and old. Reminisce and relax*

We are inviting current and former League members. We want to reach as many former members as possible. If you know of a former League member please send name and contact information to Marjorie Burr, 522-2528, burrmmb@aol.com.

More details at League meetings and in the April VOTER.

## **LWVGLC WEB WISDOM**

By Dale Yeo, Voter Services and Webmaster

Have you checked out the LWVGLC website recently? You might be surprised at what knowledge is contained within its modern pages. Do not be afraid of exploring the contents by clicking on the tabs and the links within them.

Start on the main page and look at the calendar. If you want to know more details, put your cursor on the name of the event and click. More details will appear.

The Voter tab takes you to digital copies of The Voter all the way back to the Annual Meeting of 2011.

The Voter Information tab takes you to very important civic information for all of us. One of the most important is the recently updated Who's Who. This is a treasure trove that is helpful when you want to contact the elected officials who hold sway over our lives in Dōna Ana County and when you want to know more about the offices they hold. Many questions about voting can be answered there, and if they are not answered, you are directed to places where they can be answered. At the bottom of the page are the Archives of Voters Guides and older Who's Who publications. The Who's Who for 2011, and 2013 (and older) were not saved in a digital format. **I would like to borrow any old paper copies of the Who's Who** in order to scan them for our records.

If you want to find our studies and programs, click on the Program tab. The Education Study link includes book reviews, interviews, study topics, and other links to still relevant information.

The For Members tab reveals LWVGLC policies and job descriptions. If you have a question about the internal workings of the LWVGLC, you might look in this section. An especially useful form you can print from this page is the Expense Report.

The Communications Links page provides links to League and governmental resources as well as other informative websites.

There is a lot of material posted on the website and it is difficult for me to take care of it and keep it up-to-date on my own. If you see errors or omissions **PLEASE** call my attention to them by emailing me at y.dale43@gmail. com .

Our website usage has increased dramatically over the last few years. The statistics from our website provider say that more than **39, 582 different people** (computers) viewed our site in 2017. However, nearly half of those originated from Russia, some were from a large scattering of other countries, and a small but significant number were made by robots, "unknown" and "anonymous."

## ***LWVGLC Book Club***

**February 22, 2018, 2:00-4:00 at the home of Vicki Simons**

"Endurance: A Year in Space, A Lifetime of Discovery" by Scott Kelly

A personal memoir by the astronaut who spent a record-breaking year aboard the International Space Station. He describes navigating the extreme challenges of long-term spaceflight, both the mundane and the life-threatening; the devastating effects on the body; the isolation from everyone he loves and the comforts of earth; the catastrophic risks of colliding with space junk; and the still more haunting threat of being unable to help should tragedy strike at home. Kelly had faced that agonizing situation when, on a previous mission, his twin brother's wife, American Congresswoman Gabby Gifford, was shot while he still had two months left in space.

**March 22, 2018, 2:00-4:00, place TBD**

"Collusion: Secret Meetings, Dirty Money, and How Russia Helped Donald Trump Win" by Luke Harding

This expose lays out the Trump administration's ties to Moscow and Russia's decades-in-the-making political game to upend American democracy. Drawing on new material and his expert understanding of Moscow and its players, Harding takes the reader through every bizarre and disquieting detail of the "Trump-Russia" story.

**April 26, 2018, 2:00-4:00 at the home of Dale Yeo**

"A Fine Mess: A Global Quest for a Simpler, Fairer and More Efficient Tax System" by TR Reid (Best seller)

Reid travels around the world to solve the urgent problem of America's failing tax code, unraveling a complex topic in plain English and telling a rollicking story along the way. Can we make the U.S. tax system simpler, fairer and more efficient? Yes, yes, and yes. Can we cut tax rates and still bring in more revenue? Yes.

## ***OBSERVERS POSTS***

OBSERVER REPORT by Mary Ellen Knapp

### ***Las Cruces City Council, February 5, 2018***

Regular Meeting

Mayor and five Councilors present – Councilor Flores absent

It was announced that former Councilor Olga Pedroza was very ill. Councilors expressed their concern along with their respect, admiration and fondness for their former colleague.

Agenda items of particular interest were:

### **Board Appointments**

Mary Morgan – Health and Human Services

Ana Lisa Gouneau – Mesilla Valley Public Housing Authority

Rick Sepple – Affordable Housing

Jose Aranda – Branigan Library

### **The following two resolutions were removed from the Consent Agenda for discussion:**

**APPROVED** - Payment not to exceed \$265,000 to Sierra Norte Land Holdings, LLC, for construction of a neighborhood park in the Metro Verde South Subdivision with an amendment to remove “trails” from the resolution. (6 ayes, 1 absent)

**APPROVED** – Authorizing entering into an agreement to develop parkland and improve sewer infrastructure (which avoids requirement of a sewer lift station) with Rincon Valley, LLC and Rinconada Development in exchange for deferring road improvements to Riconada Blvd. (6 ayes, 1 absent)

**Three items were removed from the “Tabled” category and then “Tabled Indefinitely”** because of the recent strong increase in interest rates. The items are as follows:

**TABLED INDEFINITELY** – Authorizing Escrow Agreement and Loan Agreement, not to exceed \$3,200,000, to acquire, equip and install Energy Conservation Measures throughout Las Cruces. (6 ayes, 1 absent)

**TABLED INDEFINITELY** – Authorizing a contract with McKinstry Essention, LLC an Energy Service Company for implementing New Mexico's Local Energy Efficiency Performance Program for improvements to city facilities, grounds and parks, not to exceed \$2,957,755. (6 ayes, 1 absent)

**TABLED INDEFINITELY** – Authorizing McKinstry Essention, LLC, for the Energy Savings Construction Program, to work outside hours of 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (6 ayes, 1 absent)

**APPROVED** – Authorizing acceptance of a Grant Award of \$10,000 for an outdoor fitness gym project from 2018 National Fitness Campaign Fit Radio. Granting agency is National Fitness Campaign. Required match is \$80,000. Besides park location, discussion centered around vandalism, liability and safety in handling of equipment in our high temperatures. Two possible park locations have been identified for consideration in each council district. The Parks and Recreation Board's location recommendation will be presented to Council for vote on March 19. (6 ayes, 1 absent)

### ***OBSERVER REPORT: South Central Solid Waste Authority***

Submitted by Johnnie R. Aldrich

Regular Meeting 02/15/2018

1 Board Member Absent

7 Total # Board Members

Head's up, Readers!

In addition to the routine business of this meeting, almost an hour was devoted to discussion of radical changes in recycling program policies that soon will be implemented for all users. "...[A] real crisis," and "...a genuine upheaval in the recycling industry" were expressions used by SCSWA Director Patrick Peck and Friedman Recycling CEO Morris Friedman, respectively, to describe the reasons for the coming changes.

Background: China is the principal buyer of recyclables from the entire U.S.A. Several months ago, all of China's clients were told that, beginning 1 March 2018, the recyclable items would be severely limited to "high quality" goods. To that end, SCSWA began efforts in November to caution the public about contamination in our collection practices; e.g., everything that goes into a container of recyclables must be clean.

Emphasis was given to the fact that neither the SCSWA nor Friedman Recycling Inc. is responsible for the radical changes that will be required in coming months. Mismanagement of either entity, those who do the collecting (SCSWA) or those who do the processing (Friedman) can be blamed for this situation. Mayor Miyagishima, a member of the SCSWA Board, suggested that the recycling may have to be curtailed for a few months while the search for new overseas buyers continues. (Note the use of "may" in that sentence.)

Finally, we should not panic because we are "forewarned"! Board members are working diligently to find solutions. Director Peck is now associated with two different national recycling commissions that are investigating solutions, so we users will have immediate access to the most accurate information. Public education outreach in Las Cruces and Doña Ana County, with detailed explanation, will begin soon.

## ***OBSERVER'S REPORT Las Cruces Utilities Board & Advisory***

Submitted by Susan Schmugge

**Las Cruces Utilities Board (LCU)**

**Utility Customer Advisory Group (UCAG)**

I have been attending the monthly **Las Cruces Utilities Board (LCU)** and the **Utility Customer Advisory Group (UCAG)** meetings for the last 8-10 months. UCAG members were appointed by the Las Cruces City Council to act as customer representatives to LCU as it determines new rates for the 4 utilities under its control. The first rate under consideration is for water and new rates will be effective July 1. The last rate increase was in 2009 and LCU has adopted a new, quicker, and simpler process to determine the new water rates. UCAG's work is the beginning of that process.

All meetings of UCAG are open to the public at 3p.m. on the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 680 N. Motel Blvd. A **power point presentation** explaining water rates in Las Cruces is available



at [www.las-cruces.org/UCAG](http://www.las-cruces.org/UCAG). Comments and questions may be sent to [UCAG@las-cruces.org](mailto:UCAG@las-cruces.org). For further information please call 575-528-3502.

## ***DOÑA ANA SHERIFF'S OFFICE (DASO) CITIZENS' POLICE ACADEMY***

Eight Saturdays for four hours each morning  
January 27th-March 17th

The stated purpose of the Citizens' Police Academy is to provide citizens with a comprehensive look into the functions of Dona County law enforcement in order to counteract the sound-bite impressions of their work that are driven by politics and the media (Sheriff Enrique Vigil). The courses and demonstrations have been very well organized, interesting, informative and thorough. I have learned and am learning many new things about the different aspects of law enforcement and am also developing a much greater respect for what DASO does and the people who do it, in spite of the inherent limitations of the system. Presentations each Saturday include Power Points, training videos, discussions, tours of facilities, exercises, re-enactments and demonstrations. These academies are offered periodically and I highly recommend attendance at one.

Submitted by Dale E. Yeo  
February 15, 2018

### **MARCH 2018 VOTER**

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

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